JOAN!!!

A

NOVEL.

BY

MATILDA FITZJOHN.

You have no great pretenſions to wit or ſprightlineſs of genius.—I grant it.

MARC. ANTONIN.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

JOAN!!!

CHAP. I.

IT was a deep ſcheme that had occaſioned the embaſſy to Chartham; and to explain it, we muſt carry back our readers to the time when poor intoxicated Dennis was diſmiſſed from Sir Clifford Byram's ſervice. He had been kindly received by the clergyman whom Sir Clifford had permitted to take him, and looked forward with eager expectation to the end of his year, when he was to return to a

family his very ſoul, notwithſtanding his occaſional ill treatment, and his conſequent reſentments, loved. The name of his preſent maſter was Broome: Sir Clifford had lately called him to that part of the country, by beſtowing on him the living of A—; induced to this kindneſs by recollecting him as Lambert's early friend. Broome found his good patron a valuable neighbor, and diſpoſed, as far as Mr. Laſſiter would permit, to be every body's friend; but he was obliged in all his tête-à-tête converſations with him to be particularly cautious, leſt he ſhould betray an important ſecret he bore in his boſom reſpecting the deceaſed Lambert Byram—no leſs a ſecret than his having, while reſident in Yorkſhire, nearly twenty years before married him and Joanna Doveridge. Sir Clifford's diſinclination to ſpeak of his family, it is true, ſpared Broome much trouble; but it at the ſame time mortified him, as he wiſhed much to have known ſome particulars reſpecting the fate of Lambert's

Lambert's firſt wife, and whether there remained any iſſue of that marriage.

Mr. Broome, who in a hard ſtruggle through the world, had now and then ſeen the wrong ſide of human nature, was not ſlow in decyphering the character of Mr. Laſſiter: he had known ſome ſuch men before; and having generally obſerved that their own intereſt was their ſole object, and that in their contempt of reſtriction they generally over-reached themſelves, he made himſelf maſter of this gentleman's particular views, and ſuffered him to go on unmoleſted, arguing from the dogmata of his ſtudies, that if *centrifugal motion increaſes as the ſquares of the diſtances increaſe*, Mr. Laſſiter's velocity muſt, *vice verſa*, increaſe in the ſame proportion as he drew near the centre of his wiſhes, and that his celerity muſt be, like that of Phaëton, his deſtruction.

He therefore heard all his boaſtings, when at a diſtance from Sir Clifford, of his

unbounded influence over *that weak old man*, with ſilent comment; and ſuffered him at the book-club, the bowling-green, and in the veſtry, to give uninterrupted hints, that a few years, and his own induſtry and genius, would render him the firſt man in the pariſh. His tone, indeed, had been ſomewhat lowered by ſome unfortunate ſymptoms of wrong-headed poſitiveneſs the *weak old man* had ſhewn in his qualified ſeverity towards *that profligate wretch*, Dennis Geoghegan, whom, *in his great aſſiduity* for *worthy Sir Clifford's* intereſt, he had wiſhed to remove entirely, as he gladly would have done all his other faithful ſervants, from acceſs to him. And, indeed, in this particular he had been fortunate, for having loſt his wife, who might have been a good ſpy, he had placed her ſiſter, Mrs. Brown, formerly Lady Jemima's ſervant, at the head of Sir Clifford's domeſtic arrangements; and large would have been his profits from this *coup de main*, had not the old gentle-

man unfortunately very ſoon ſo far taken a diſlike to Mrs. Brown, that though he could not, after what Mr. Laſſiter had ſaid of her, doubt her great merits, he ſeldom wiſhed to ſee her; and his ears unhappily coinciding in ſentiment with his perverſe eyes, he as ſeldom deſired to hear her. But this prejudice, there was no doubt, time would conquer; nothing more was neceſſary than to keep buſy informers at a diſtance; and as Mr. Laſſiter's *convivial pleaſantry*, his *good ſong*, his *dexterity in carving*, his *deep information in politics*, and his *univerſal talents*, made him generally *neceſſary* in company, there was little danger that any thing he was not aware of ſhould reach Sir Clifford.

Thus watched as was the old gentleman by his worſt enemy, and thus controuled by fear, as was his modeſt friend, it would have been impoſſible for him to have obtained the leaſt information to be depended on concerning the companion of his ſtu-

dies, Lambert Byram, had it not been for the accident that made Dennis his domeſtic; and even from him he could learn nothing reſpecting Miſs Doveridge, not only whoſe marriage, but whoſe name he dared not mention, ſince it was evident that no *firſt wife* of Mr. Byram's was known of. He could only learn from Dennis that there was a young female, ſuppoſed by the family to be a natural daughter of Mr. Byram's, who was kept with the utmoſt privacy at the houſe in the north, that ſhe had no other name than *Elizabeth*, that Mr. Byram always ſeemed to love her more than either of his children by Lady Jemima; but that her ſituation was rendered more than ever myſterious by his having diſclaimed her as his *natural daughter*, and that he had expired in her arms. To this account, which Mr. Broome was forced to diſtil at various times from the fog of Dennis's intellects, his informer was always prompt to add the moſt enthuſiaſtic commendation of this nameleſs Elizabeth;

Elizabeth; but to his inquiries after her fate, ſubſequent to the death of Lambert, he could only anſwer with tears, that to learn it was the purpoſe of his fatal journey to London, where ſhe had been placed by Lady Jemima, but that he feared from the ill ſucceſs of his reſearches, that ſhe had been a very naughty girl, and yet ſomehow he thought folks belied her, for ſhe was ſuch a *ſwate crater.*

Early in the month of September, Sir Clifford was ſeized with an illneſs that threatened his life, though not immediately; and Mr. Broome was greatly terrified leſt he might quit the world in the ignorance and indifference towards his family in which Laſſiter had ſo ſcrupulouſly kept him. He therefore one day, when he viſited him to inquire after his night's reſt, took the opportunity of Laſſiter's abſence, and Mrs. Browne's petulant diſmiſſion from the ſick-room, to expreſs an humble hope that Sir Clifford did not retard his reco-

very by that anxiety of mind which generally attends unſettled worldly affairs. He intreated pardon, but he thought it his duty to mention it.

"I ſee your motive, Mr. Broome, and am obliged to you for the hint. I know my caſe to be dangerous, and I have this morning ſpoken to Laſſiter, and given him inſtructions about my will. It will be a very ſhort buſineſs; I ſhall leave almoſt all I have to one diſtant relation, for ſince I have loſt my ſon, I have no body to care for: thoſe he has left behind him, I am ſure are not to be truſted with money."

"Do you mean Lady Jemima and her daughter?"

"Yes; who elſe ſhould I mean?"

"Forgive me, Sir; there was, I am told, another young perſon who claimed Mr. Byram's protection."

"Yes,

" Yes, yes, as a ward, as a ward, ſhe did—I have heard of her—but ſhe was only a ward—nothing more than a ward; and Laſſiter tells me her friends reclaimed her, and ſhe is very well married in India."

" I do not know, Sir; I ſhould be ſorry to offend you, or to doubt Mr. Laſſiter's ſuperior information, but I am perſuaded this young perſon was Mr. Byram's daughter, and an elder daughter too."

" No, Sir, no ſuch thing, I aſſure you; it was once, I know, ſuſpected, but my ſon himſelf denied it. I am convinced it was no ſuch thing—the Byrams have known no blot in their eſcutcheon, at leaſt *my* branch of the family—no natural children amongſt us, Sir, I aſſure you."

" Have patience with me, I beſeech you, Sir Clifford; I mean no injury to

the honour of your family; but as it is one of the firſt offices of charity to plead the cauſe of the fatherleſs, I hold it my peculiar duty to diſcharge it."

"You are a very conſcientious man, Mr. Broome, and I like you the better for it; I wiſh we had more ſuch—I will hear you. If the young woman, be ſhe who ſhe may, be unfortunate, I am diſpoſed to do what I can for her; but I tell you, ſhe is well married, and no child of my ſon's. I would rather be kind to her as a ſtranger, than as an illegitimate branch of the Byram family."

"The perſon I allude to is no illegitimate branch, nor do I think any ſuch exiſts in your family; but I hear ſhe was brought up with great privacy at Mr. Byram's at Balla-craig, that he took great pains in her education, and was particularly fond of her—that he died in her arms.

arms.—Forgive me for recalling your grief, Sir—I was too impetuous."

"Go on—it cuts me to the heart to think of my poor boy——but go on, Mr. Broome, I am obliged to you."

"I too, Sir, have heard that Mr. Byram denied to your man, Dennis, that this was his natural daughter; but *I* am convinced theſe were words intended only as a prelude to his avowing her to be, as from my ſoul I believe her, his LEGITIMATE daughter: and by all account, a daughter to be boaſted of."

"It is impoſſible," replied Sir Clifford, in an univerſal terror. "It cannot be, Mr. Broome; would to God it were ſo! I might then have *one* comfort—I ſhould not then *know* them all to be wicked and cruel—but it cannot be."

"It *can* be, and my ſpirit ſays it *is*. Can you," added Broome, in a ſuppli-

cating tone and poſture, "forgive an indiſcretion of your ſon's? Can you forgive me for aiding it?"

"Proceed; he has long had my pardon, and I forgive every thing."

"Then, Sir, near twenty years ago I married him when I was ſettled in Yorkſhire—I married him to a young woman whoſe attraction and various excellence might have claimed praiſe rather than pardon for his unſanctioned love."

"And who—who—who was this young woman? you ſhake my nerves to atoms."

"Be calm, good Sir, the ſtory is ſimple, and ought not to agitate you. Her name was Doveridge—at leaſt by that name I knew her."

"What, was ſhe of the extinct baron's family?"

"I be-

"I believe so."

"Odso! Why did not Lambert tell me he liked her? it was a good family, an honourable family; I could have had no objection. I think too I have seen her; she was at Bath about the time you mention, and a very pretty girl. Why did not Lambert say he loved her?"

"She had no money."

"O no—now I recollect—her father died very poor—but she was of a good family."

"You were bent on his match with Lady Jemima."

"True, I remember, I thought well of her then. And what then became of my son's wife?"

"She

" She died, I ſuppoſe, previous to his conſenting to your wiſh."

" I am very ſorry for it!—I remember he changed his mind all on a ſudden after being very obſtinate—but I little thought, Mr. Broome, what I was doing, or, I aſſure you, I would not have done it."

Sir Clifford then made Mr. Broome relate all the particulars of his ſon's firſt marriage. The detail was juſt finiſhed when Laſſiter entered, in a fright at hearing how long the parſon had been cloſetted: he ſcouled at him as he paid his ſneaking compliments to his ſick patron; and then having ſeen Mr. Broome out, took his place by the bedſide, with a reſolution to keep a ſharper look-out in future.

Mr. Broome having expreſſed no wiſh that what he had related ſhould be kept ſecret, Sir Clifford immediately, and with indubi-

indubitable tokens of ſatisfaction, communicated the hopes he entertained that he might yet find one of his family deſerving of his regard; and having related the circumſtances he had juſt learnt, he waited Laſſiter's anſwer.

"Why, Sir," anſwered the man of law, "I really thought better—I entertained a better opinion of Mr. Broome's underſtanding, than to ſuppoſe he could have come to you with ſuch a canting ſtory as this: I could have told you as much long ago, if I had had leſs regard for Mr. Byram's credit, or the honour of your family; but, in my idea, family reputation is a very ſerious matter; and I would no more injure the character of an ancient family, ſuch as your's, Sir Clifford, than my own."

"You are a very honeſt man, Mr. Laſſiter, and have uniformly ſhewn yourſelf the friend of my family; but here is nothing

thing at all degrading; for Mr. Broome says he himself performed the marriage ceremony, and an alliance with the *Doveridges* is rather honourable than otherwise!"

"True, my dear Sir, provided the character of the lady herself had been unimpeached!"

"Why! was it not?"

"By no means, my dear Sir Clifford; and it was for that reason I wished you never to hear of this marriage. Would it have been, do you think, the part of a friend, such as I am, to have told you, without the smallest plea of justice, or prospect of benefit to any one, that your son, at an age when young men are excusable for loving indiscreetly, had married a woman of light character, but whose faults have been long since buried in the grave?"

"And

"And *did* Byram do ſo?"

"Undoubtedly—I could call many witneſſes of it—Betſy Doveridge, as we uſed always to call her, when I was a young fellow about the inns of court, was always to be ſeen in the gay lounges of the town. There was a young nobleman, a particular friend of mine, for whom I uſed to tranſact a great deal of buſineſs in the money line, wanted ſadly to have taken her as a *chere amie*; but I believe your ſon was the obſtacle, at leaſt ſo he told me."

"Did you know her perſon?"

"O yes, perfectly well; ſhe was pretty well known amongſt us gay young fellows."

"Her appearance, when I ſaw her at Bath, was not at all that of ſuch a female. Sure it could not be the ſame! Was ſhe you mean rather low, and *embonpoint*?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Had ſhe a very fine complexion, with light eyes and hair?"

"Yes, exactly ſo."

"Was the tone of her voice very charming? for I remember that particularly."

"She was remarkable for it."

"Yet, after all, it cannot be the ſame, for *this* Miſs Doveridge was with a very reſpectable woman of my moſt intimate acquaintance."

"True, true; Mrs.—Mrs.—I forget her name."

"Her name was Halnaby."

"Ay, ay, I knew her; a very worthy woman indeed. I knew ſhe did what ſhe could

could for Betſy; but ſhe ran away from her, Sir Clifford; Betſy was not to be controuled, ſhe was a girl of ſpirit."

"But how could my ſon think of marrying ſuch a woman?"

"She had a well-hung *tongue*, Sir, as well as Mr. Broome, Sir. She found ſhe had a chance of being admitted into a good family, and a very ancient family, on honourable terms; ſo ſhe made plea of her ſituation; ſhe worked on Mr. Byram's feelings; ſhe put on demure airs, paſſed for a Magdalen Miſs:—he married her, and muſt have been ruined, had ſhe not died ſoon after the birth of her daughter.

"She *did* then leave a daughter?"

"She did, Sir; but to my knowledge Mr. Byram, as he married her from ſuch a ſituation, when he came to know more of the world and of female arts, did not

chuſe

chuſe to conſider this child as his: he brought her up, out of pure humanity, as a ſtranger; and he was particularly anxious that ſhe ſhould never be conſidered as diſgracing his family by belonging to it. Lady Jemima, in *that* inſtance, I muſt ſay, behaved well; ſhe did all that was to be done for her; ſhe ſent her over to an Eaſt Indian family in London, who got her out; and as I have told you before, ſhe is very well married at Calcutta. I think it is—I forget the gentleman's name who married her—it is Brockford, or Brockhurſt, or ſome ſuch name; I really cannot charge my memory with it, for I have ſo much on my head; but I know he is immenſely rich. But you were ſaying ſomething laſt night about your will, Sir Clifford; when would you chuſe I ſhould take your directions for it?"

"I ſhould like to know firſt what is really become of this girl; for if ſhe was born in wedlock, ſhe is one of my family,

mily, and Mr. Broome ſpeaks well of her."

"Mr. Broome! Sir.—Mr. Broome can know nothing of her. What acquaintance can Mr. Broome have with her? unleſs, indeed, he was *acquainted*, as he might be, I grant, with her mother."

"Do not be cenſorious, Laſſiter; Broome is a very worthy man, and I have a great regard for him."

"I have no jealouſy, Sir, of Mr. Broome. Mr. Broome is nothing to me; only mark the end of Mr. Broome's kindneſs in ſtriving to render you unhappy."

"I cannot conceive that to be his view. I will, however, look into the affair. Mr. Broome ſpeaks very highly of the young girl; and Dennis, by his account, adores her."

"Dennis,

"Dennis, indeed!—Dennis may have more reaſons than one. I wonder what that idle fellow had to do in London!"

"He is an honeſt fellow with all his faults, Laſſiter. But, however, if I am at all better in the afternoon, I will write to Lady Jemima. I hope ſhe is going on at Swanſea a little better than heretofore; ſhe will tell me what is become of the girl."

"Will you ſo? old gentleman," muttered Laſſiter to himſelf, "I will be beforehand with you.—Well, Sir, I muſt take my leave for the preſent. I dare ſay an hundred people are waiting for me at home. I hope I ſhall find you better, Sir Clifford, when I ſee you again."

CHAP. II.

THE ſmall diſtance between Sir Clifford's manſion and Mr. Laſſiter's houſe in the town, was ſufficient for his plotting head to contrive the defeat of a plan of benevolence; and he would immediately have reſolved on a journey in perſon to Swanſea, had he not feared the ſuperior efficacy of Mr. Broome's arguments in his abſence. He juſtly looked on the parſon as his worſt enemy; next to him he hated ſimple, blundering Dennis; and well he might hate him; for it is like fencing with a left-handed adverſary when cunning has to deal with ſterling integrity —ſuch ſtrokes are never to be parried.

But

But the anvil of his brains ſoon produced the means of removing one of theſe impediments, and perhaps the more formidable; for Dennis's enthuſiaſm in the cauſe of Elizabeth could never be reſtrained but by his fear that he might, as he had found heretofore, by blundering, exactly thwart his own deſigns; whereas Mr. Broome, aiming at nothing but rectitude, and believing Mrs. Byram to be dead, had no particular object to ſtimulate or to guide him. It was therefore Laſſiter's intention to unite his forces with thoſe of Lady Jemima, and to remove Dennis, by making him his meſſenger.

He was ſaved the trouble of ſeeking a pretext for a conference with honeſt Teague, by meeting him in the ſtreet with ſome vegetables he had been fetching from a diſtant garden. He accoſted him with an unuſual degree of condeſcenſion, and told him he had been juſt making a viſit to Sir Clifford.

" And

"And how is my dare maſter, Sir?"

"Very poorly, indeed, Dennis; it grieves me to ſee him drooping ſo faſt. I would not have you tell what I ſay, becauſe I hear the doctors are of a different way of thinking; but in my opinion, Sir Clifford is going down hill very faſt."

Poor Dennis ſet down his baſket, and began to make faces, and to wipe his eyes.

"I wiſhed, honeſt Dennis, to have talked to you a little farther on this buſineſs, but you are not at leiſure now, and I ſhould not chuſe Mr. Broome to know any thing about it; for between friends, Dennis, I do not think Mr. Broome at all a well-wiſher to your dear maſter. I wiſhed to have had a little talk with *you*."

"Mr. Broome not a well-wiſher to my dare maſter! Why, Sir, he ſays he loves him!"

"Aye, Dennis, ſo do many, for their own intereſt. I ſhould have liked a little talk with you, becauſe *you* are a ſenſible fellow, and love your maſter indeed."

"Why, Sir, as to that matter, if I can do my poor dare maſter any good by your ſpaking to me, I would come to you at your houſe preſently, as ſoon as I have carried theſe things home; for my maſter Broome is out, and ſo not at home at preſent."

This was now agreed on, and Dennis ſoon followed to Laſſiter's manufactory of law and iniquity. A dram of brandy was the preface, and Mr. Laſſiter then, with a ſolemn countenance, and a ſonorous tone of deep concern, thus addreſſed the Liffy's countryman.

"I told you, my good Dennis, I could truſt you, becauſe you were a ſenſible, honeſt fellow."

The flattery and the brandy were irreſiſtible; Dennis bowed, ſimpered, and looked duly *cullable.*

"It is not every one I would truſt on ſuch an occaſion, and as the matter is very important to your maſter, Sir Clifford—not to *me,* Dennis—you underſtand me—I ſhall not be a halfpenny richer or poorer for it—you underſtand me, Dennis."

"Yes, Sir, parfickly; I know your honour is a very clever gentleman."

"Well then, you muſt promiſe me; nay, you muſt ſwear to me, never to reveal what I am going to tell you."

"Never—if it is for my dare maſter's good."

"I tell you it is; what can I ſay more?"

"O dare, Sir, I dare ſay you are right, for you are a very clever gentleman; but

my miſerable thick ſkull is ſo apt to miſtake, that I often make a bit of a blunder when I don't mean it. I will ſwear with all my ſoul, becauſe I am ſure ſuch a gentleman would never deceive ſuch an honeſt poor fellow as my ſwate ſelf."

Mr. Laffiter then preſcribed the form of adjuration—Dennis repeated it *verbatim*; and he proceeded.

"I ſee very clearly, that it is Mr. Broome's wiſh to ſet your old maſter againſt his family, that he may, if he dies (as I think it is probable he will do ſhortly) leave all his great wealth to a diſtant relation, a friend of Broome's I make no doubt. Now this is certainly, you ſee, Dennis, very diſhoneſt."

"Very diſhoneſt, indeed, Sir; it is almoſt as bad as being a rogue."

"The ſame thing exactly. Now, I want your aſſiſtance to prevent this."

Dennis

Dennis looked thoughtful; and then, on a corroboration of Laſſiter's ſuppoſitions, he related to him the ſar-otherwiſe intentioned inquiries Mr. Broome had made concerning the family, and particularly Miſs Elizabeth.

" Aye, aye, replied Laſſiter, it was for no good purpoſe depend on it, that he queſtioned you; but it is for the ſake of this Miſs Elizabeth, whom you ſeem ſo to love, that I want your ſervices."

" Sir, I will go through fire and water, or both together, to ſerve her, a ſwate angel!"

" Do you know, Dennis, what is become of her?"

" No, no," he anſwered, ſhaking his head, and ſighing deeply. " If you wo'nt tell, Sir, I will tell you a ſecret. I hoped a little bit ago, that my maſter, Sir Clif-

ford, was going to be ill and die, and then he would ask me about my young lady; so I went up to London, you see, on purpose to look after her; for I had heard where my lady, Devil burn her, had sent her; but I got nothing by my foolish head but a letter, with a partickler account of her, and that I lost when I lost my place."

"Aye, Dennis, I was mighty sorry for you then; I did what I could for you with Sir Clifford, but he was in such a passion he would not hear *me*."

"*You*, Sir; why, I thought you spoke again me!"

"No, Dennis, never; I do not know what *Mr. Broome* might do; but *I* did not I assure you—it is not my way to speak against poor servants—their character is their bread."

"But, Sir, Sir, Mr. Broome took me."

"Yes,

"Yes, Dennis, he ſaw you was a good ſervant, and an honeſt fellow, ſo he had a mind to you himſelf—ſo what *I* ſaid went for nothing."

"Lord love your ſwate face," cried Dennis, in rapture, throwing his arms round Laſſiter's neck, with a violence that ſeemed to make the lawyer ſuſpect he had met with ſpeedy retribution, "why I did not think it had been *you*."

"Well, well, Dennis," cried Laſſiter ſhaking him off, and putting his diſcompoſed hair and linen to rights, "all I want to know of you, is, whether, to ſerve this young lady you talk of, you would take a journey into Wales."

"I would take a journey even to London, Sir, again for her."

"Well, then, I have reaſon to believe that Lady Jemima is a very different kind

of woman from what ſhe was. She has been very ill treated, Dennis; between friends I may tell *you* ſo."

"She is a devil, Sir."

"No, no, Dennis, the beſt of us have our faults; but ſhe has been very kind to your young lady lately."

"That's more than ever ſhe was while I knew her."

"Aye, but ſhe is very much altered; and I know ſhe is the only perſon that can prevent Mr. Broome's deſigns, and give me what information is neceſſary to perſuade Sir Clifford to make this Elizabeth that you talk of, his heir."

"What then, will Miſs Elizabeth be rich?"

"She

" She *ſhall* be, Dennis, if you will do exactly as I bid you, and keep yourſelf ſober."

" I will do any thing," cried Dennis, in ecſtacy; " I would kill myſelf for the ſwate crater, for I ſhall be in haven if ſhe is rich."

He then, with tolerable patience, heard his inſtructions, which were to get over to Coventry that evening with a letter, which Mr. Laſſiter would prepare; and there to take the mail, which would carry him to his deſtination: he was then to find Lady Jemima, deliver the letter to her, and wait her anſwer.

" But what muſt I ſay to Mr. Broome about leaving him, Sir?"

"Oh, that is the eaſieſt matter in the world; only tell him ſaucily, that you have heard of a better place, and chuſe to be diſmiſſed;

he will only ſuppoſe you drunk, and that, I ſuppoſe, honeſt Dennis, is no very great miracle. But be ſure you ſay nothing of having ſeen me—come, take another glaſs of brandy."

Dennis went away perfectly ſatisfied, either with the arguments, or the liquor; and Mr. Broome not returning home by the time he was to meet Mr. Laffiter, he was too zealous in Miſs Elizabeth's cauſe to wait; he therefore did the moſt prudent thing he ever did in his life—he held his tongue; and truſting that his intereſt with Sir Clifford was not in the leaſt endangered by his ingratitude to ſuch a rogue as he ſuppoſed his preſent maſter, he quitted his ſervice without remorſe.

Mr. Laffiter had, againſt his arrival, framed the following letter to Lady Jemima:

"MADAM,

" MADAM,

" When I confeſs that my behaviour to you, while I had the honour to be employed by Sir Clifford Byram, in Dublin, was not only involuntary, but founded on the groſſeſt miſconception, I hope I need not add, that it has given me the ſincereſt concern, and that I ſhould be happy to make any compenſation in my power. An occaſion now offers, in which I can prove my ſincerity, and render you a moſt important ſervice; and gladly, very gladly, do I embrace the opportunity.

" You are, I preſume, Madam, no ſtranger to the indeciſive character of Sir Clifford, or to that weakneſs which renders him the prey of every deſigning ſycophant. From a man of this deſcription he is now in the utmoſt danger; and I ſee plainly that a very few weeks, nay, a few days, may convey the whole of his property into the hands of ſtrangers. His

health is rapidly declining, and his intellects have been long going.

"It is, as far as I can penetrate, the wish of the person whose art I dread, to set up some one to personate the natural daughter of Mr. Byram; and for this purpose a letter is to be dispatched to you by to-morrow's mail, for information respecting her: this letter, it is not to be doubted, will be dictated to Sir Clifford, if not written for him; and should it, in spite of art, reach you, the answer I am confident will never arrive.

"I therefore dispatch a special messenger to advise you, on no account, to give any information respecting this illegitimate daughter, to whom I am certain, in Sir Clifford's present infatuation, he designs, however he may be circumvented, to leave every thing. By disabling him from doing so rash an act, you probably insure his dying without a will, which will ultimately, as

his property ſtands, be much to the advantage of you, as Mr. Byram's widow, and of your daughters, as his co-heireſſes.

" The meſſenger I truſt on this buſineſs is fooliſh Dennis Geoghegan; he knows nothing of its import, but ſets out under the perſuaſion, that it is for the advantage of Mr. Byram's natural daughter, whoſe cauſe he warmly eſpouſes. Should you be fearful of his evidence, he will now be in your power; and as, from the place where you are, you can very eaſily get him on board a merchant-man, I think I conſult your intereſt in chuſing him for the bearer of this.

" I have only to add, that in whatever plan your Ladyſhip propoſes, I ſhall be happy to aid you, and that you may depend on the ſecrecy of

" Your's moſt devotedly,

" W. LASSITER."

CHAP. III.

LADY JEMIMA, whom this letter reached in due time, might, perhaps, have ſo far been taken in, as to ſuppoſe Mr. Laſſiter meant well to Sir Clifford, had it not been for the fineſſe of chuſing Dennis for his meſſenger, of whoſe fidelity ſhe had often, to her great inconvenience, been convinced. In that part of his letter which reſpected the diſpoſal of him, ſhe ſaw the cloven foot, and ſhe reſolved, though ſhe might be aſſiſted by his ſervices, not to be wholly guided by him.

Impreſſed with the idea of Sir Clifford's leaving *the whole of his property* to Elizabeth, ſhe thought his dying inteſtate a contemptible chance; ſhe had greater plans

in

in view, and a far deeper game to play, than that Mr. Laſſiter had dealt for.

She ſaw it would be far more prudent to ſupport a claimant to his munificence, with whom, through ſuperior influence, ſhe might ſhare the large bequeſt. Had ſhe known where to ſeek Elizabeth, her natural hatred of her would have prevented her electing her again into her rightful ſituation; her thoughts immediately flew towards her own eldeſt daughter, whom ſhe ſuppoſed partaking all the advantages of Lord and Lady Armathwaite's miſplaced fondneſs. She believed it not impoſſible to withdraw her from them for a time, to get Sir Clifford's property privately ſecured to her, without the ſmalleſt recognition of her ſuppoſed mother; and then to procure, by perſuaſion or threats, from the young lady, ſuch a portion for herſelf as would again ſet her afloat on the ocean of folly and extravagance.

She

She ſaw clearly, if not the *morality* the *prudence* of the meaſure her correſpondent had recommended for the ſecurity of Dennis; and receiving the letter while ſhe was in company with the captain of a coaſting veſſel, who was a ſmall candidate for her favour, ſhe mentioned to him the trouble ſhe had frequently, and now more particularly ſuffered, from an idle, drunken retainer to her late huſband's family. The captain, between jeſt and earneſt, adviſed her to make the man drunk, and let him have him. The recipe was immediately followed; and when poor Dennis, late at night, wearied with his fatigue, and overcome with liquor, was thanking three or four men for their kindneſs in eſcorting him to his lodging, he found himſelf firſt hurried into a boat, and then hoiſted on board a ſhip.

One impediment being thus removed, Lady Jemima had only one object to attend to, and ſhe bent all the energy of her mind

mind towards it. Her reſolution of recalling Miſs Byram being formed, ſhe had only to do it in a way that might not defeat her expectations from the fondneſs of Lord and Lady Armathwaite; for ſhe, though the parent of the young lady, knew leſs of her temper than the loweſt ſervant of her family; her pride would not have allowed her to ſuſpect it; and indeed Lady Jemima herſelf might be forgiven, if ſhe had not ſagacity enough to ſuppoſe any thing ſo bad as the reality. She, therefore, holding her brother's intellectual endowments very cheap; for it muſt be confeſſed he had not her Ladyſhip's talents; and taking it for granted, that the mother of Elizabeth muſt be ſome filly doting woman, made no doubt of their joint attachment towards any thing that could boaſt itſelf thus connected with them; and believing her daughter's intereſt and her own to be the ſame, ſhe coveted for Miſs Byram, that ſhe might herſelf participate her gains.

To remove herſelf nearer to the ſcene of action, that ſhe might at once watch Sir Clifford, her daughter, and Laſſiter, was the next ſtep ſhe reſolved on. Waiting only the arrival of the morrow's mail, which brought her ſuch a letter as Mr. Laſſiter had predicted, ſhe wrote to her daughter Jemima, and diſpatched a perſon ſhe could depend on, with orders to make the utmoſt haſte, and to take a poſt-chaiſe the laſt ſtage. The letter contained only an earneſt requeſt that Miſs Byram would, on buſineſs of the utmoſt importance, meet her at Coventry; and it was that to which Lord Armathwaite replied, by ſaying, that the young lady lay then at the point of death.

Her Ladyſhip then, having arranged her domeſtic affairs, without returning any anſwer to Sir Clifford's letter, ſet off, unattended, in the ſtage coach, for Coventry; and in the proſpect before her, forgot the humiliating circumſtances to which her

arts had reduced her; for there was till now, no time of her life when, as Lady Jemima Fawley, or Lady Jemima Byram, ſhe would not have diſdained mingling with the *canaille* of a Welch ſtage coach.

In the place of her retirement, where ſhe had remained rather *hoping* than *contented*, and where ſhe lay perdue to watch the world's revolutions, ſhe had conducted herſelf, at leaſt with *external* credit. In the wane as were her perſonal charms, ſhe ſtill retained enough of the *haut ton* to be looked up to as ſome one of a ſuperior order of beings—her title ſounded grand; ſhe was an oracle of the great world; and having ſoon learnt, that unleſs ſhe abated ſomewhat of the exaltation of her rank, ſhe had no chance for ſociety, ſhe condeſcended, rather than be left always to the company of her own reflections, to take up with that the place afforded. The women in her heart ſhe deteſted; but for the men, ſhe had acquired ſuch a habit of angling, that ſhe could not deſiſt from it, even

even when they were not worth catching, and conſequently whatever the Swanſea belles might think of the lady of quality, the beaus all ſwore *to Got* ſhe was a charming *laty*.

To excuſe the comparative penury of her ſituation, ſhe had affected a relinquiſhment of the world, and a paſſion *for rural retirement* ever ſince the death of *her adored* Mr. Byram; and always treating Swanſea as only a temporary abode, which the claims the world had *on perſons of diſtinction*, would not ſuffer her long to enjoy, ſhe held herſelf and the minds of all who were admitted to her acquaintance in that ſtate of preparation which prevented on her part all neceſſity of punctilio, and on their's all ſurpriſe of any of her proceedings. When ſhe departed therefore from Swanſea, ſhe was ſuppoſed only to be gone to fulfil ſome of thoſe claims the great world had on the great; and her accepting ſo humble a conveyance, paſſed for

for her Ladyſhip's great humility; and every modeſt girl in lower life, whoſe delicacy preferred ſtaying at home to travelling thus unprotected, had it dinned in her ears, how much leſs pride the lady of quality had.

At Coventry ſhe took a private lodging, hired a maid-ſervant for a month, and adopted the name and ſtyle of *Mrs. Bingham*, to whom, as to a friend, ſhe was about to viſit, ſhe ordered her letters to be incloſed. Here ſhe immediately requeſted an interview with Mr. Laſſiter, who having in the courſe of his journey admitted another project into his overflowing imagination, prepared himſelf with much ſcrupuloſity of dreſs, and many ſtudied ſpeeches, to obey her commands. He choſe his deſtination to be a ſecret, even to his domeſtics and to his privy counſellor, Mrs. Browne; and ſo it remained, not even Mr. Broome ſuſpecting it.

Her

Her Ladyſhip was yet as in a ſtate of uncertainty reſpecting Miſs Byram's acquieſcence, which yet ſhe could not doubt; but it determined her on no conſideration to let Laſſiter into her plan; ſhe therefore only thanked him for his information, obſerved on the rectitude of Divine diſpenſations, which always end in the reward of the unjuſtly oppreſſed, and very coolly declared her intention of producing to Sir Clifford's notice the young woman in queſtion.

"Your Ladyſhip," replied Laſſiter, with a penetrating look, "does not mean Elizabeth, the eldeſt daughter of the late Mr. Byram?"

"Certainly I do; who elſe ſhould it be?"

"And from whence is *ſhe* to be fetched?"

"Fetched?—fetched? Mr. Laſſiter, I do not underſtand ſuch queries. Where

do

do you ſuppoſe I mean to fetch her from?"

"Come, come, my Lady," replied Laſſiter, whoſe impudence was never ſtunned for more than a minute, "you and I are friends; and the ſooner we underſtand one another the better."

"Underſtand!" repeated the lady; "I am ſure, Sir, I do not underſtand *you*, and I fancy you *chuſe to miſunderſtand me*."

"Why, Madam, it is that I *may* underſtand you that I aſk for an explanation. I aſk again from what place is this Elizabeth to be fetched?"

"Why, from the friends ſhe is with."

"Who are thoſe friends?"

"My brother."

"So

"So I thought, my Lady. Now that was exactly what I wanted to know. I see now what you are driving at."

"Well, Sir?"

"And well, Madam, too. I would advise your Ladyship to be a little careful in this scheme; I told you you had better make a friend of me at once."

"I desire, Sir, you will explain yourself, or I shall desire you may be shewn out of the house. I thought, Mr. Lassiter, you talked of doing me *service*."

"Yes, Madam, but you must not think to trick me. You may as soon think of deceiving the devil himself as me. I know what your plot is; I know you cannot produce this Elizabeth, for you have sent her to the East Indies. You have transferred the care of your own eldest daughter to your brother, doubtless with an intention

tention of paſſing her off for Elizabeth, from whence I conjecture that *the Mrs. Byram* Lord Armathwaite is, I ſee by the papers, married to ——"

"My brother married?"

"Yes, Madam, married."

"And to whom did you ſay?"

"To Mrs. Byram; and much ado I had to prevent Sir Clifford's hearing of it."

"What, had the woman the impudence to aſſume the name of Byram!"

"Yes, my good Lady, and by all account ſhe had a better right to it than ſome other folks, for *ſhe* was undoubtedly Mr. Byram's lawful wife."

"What! and had he the wickedneſs to marry *me* when his former wife was living?"

"Had your Ladyſhip never any intimation before your marriage, that he was privately married?"

"I heard, indeed, that he kept a miſtreſs; but I could not have thought ——"

"Come, come, Madam," ſaid Laſſiter, familiarly taking her Ladyſhip's hand; "do not let us waſte time in ſquabbling; you and I have but one intereſt. I will deal very plainly with you. My poor dear wife, who has been dead theſe three months, was ſiſter to your ſervant, Mrs. Browne, who was not always perhaps as careful of your ſecret affairs as ſhe ſhould have been. This Mrs. Browne is now at the head of Sir Clifford's family. I placed her there; for I can do any thing with the old man. When I have given you this information, I leave

I leave you to judge how far it is prudent to introduce, without my acquieſcence, a perſon whoſe pretenſions are controvertible."

Lady Jemima was overwhelmed by the torrent of power ſhe ſaw turned againſt her. She repented moſt ſincerely the having taken any ſtep without Laſſiter; and laying aſide every appearance of reſerve, ſhe profeſſed herſelf ready to concur in any ſcheme he ſhould propoſe for the ſecuring Sir Clifford's property from thoſe who had the beſt right to it.

Nothing could be done till the fate of the embaſſy to Chartham was decided: the parties therefore could only agree in a general ſcheme of action, which being ſettled, Mr. Laſſiter returned to his home with a promiſe to be again at Coventry on the day when the meſſenger was expected, till whoſe arrival no anſwer could be returned to Sir Clifford's letter.

CHAP. IV.

THE neceſſity of Laſſiter's abſence gave his adverſary an opportunity no art could fruſtrate, of pleading the cauſe of Elizabeth, whoſe pretenſions might have ſuffered by the unaccountable defection of her friend Dennis, had not Mr. Broome been always at hand to diſpel her grandfather's doubts, and to controvert the concluſions he ſeemed diſpoſed to draw. In fretful impatience, Sir Clifford waited Lady Jemima's anſwer, and raved at her delay: his head was now ſo full of Elizabeth and his ſchemes for her, that he gave little heed to what Laſſiter had ſaid to ruin her and her mother in his eſtimation. Mr. Broome honeſtly preached the cruelty of prejudging a young perſon by

by the failings of a parent, even ſuppoſing Mrs. Byram to have been the *Betſy Doveridge* of Mr. Laſſiter's acquaintance, which, together with Mr. Dennis's having deſerted his ſervice *to avoid the fangs of the law*, were two hardy aſſertions of that gentleman's, which Mr. Broome confeſſed he could not ſubſcribe to.

Sir Clifford, though too much inclined to think the laſt ſpeaker right, and now ſo habituated to the tyranny of his attorney, that he ſcarcely thought any one elſe could protect him, ſtill felt very ſtrongly how much greater would be the pleaſure of rendering, by his will, an oppreſſed orphan independent and happy, than that of adding to the miſuſed wealth of a very diſtant relation; and his antipathy to Lady Jemima and her children being, however it fluctuated, equal to his former doting partiality for her, he was reſolved, let her reformation be ever ſo complete, that a decent proviſion ſhould be the whole

of their inheritance from him. This reſolution, and his eagerneſs towards Elizabeth, Laſſiter ſoon found it ſo impoſſible to get rid of, that he began to think it would be wiſer to adopt Lady Jemima's plan than his own, and to ſet up *ſome* Elizabeth immediately.

Never negligent, good man! where his own intereſts were concerned, he was at Coventry early on the day appointed, and found Lady Jemima in the utmoſt need of his advice and conſolation. The meſſenger was returned—her daughter was dying.

Laſſiter began to talk of the univerſality of death, his own reſignation to the loſs of his wife, &c. &c. He was proceeding moſt piouſly.

"For Heaven's ſake," interrupted the lady, "hold your tongue, Mr. Laſſiter; I ſhould not care a ruſh about the girl's ſitua-

ſituation, but ſhe cannot *come*—think what is now to be done."

Laſſiter was outdone—he was awed—he felt ſmall, for *he* once had loſt a child, and *he* had *ſorrowed* for it. The lady's voice and philoſophy rallied his fugitive wits, but he could only repeat, "ay, what is now to be done?"

"Sir Clifford's letter muſt be put off no longer," ſaid her Ladyſhip—"it muſt be anſwered; I could perhaps in it make ſuch an apology as would procure me time enough to ſend over to Dublin for Arabella; ſhe might anſwer the purpoſe as well.

"'Tis a good thought; but will ſhe not appear too young?"

"No, ſhe was always a very ſtout girl of her age, and uſed to look as old as Elizabeth."

" Can ſhe be depended on ?"

" I think ſhe might, if I had the tutoring her, and ſhe was convinced it was for her own intereſt."

This meaſure was immediately concluded on. Lady Jemima diſdaining the aid of Laſſiter's ſquare-nibbed pen, wrote herſelf to Sir Clifford in fluent and reſpectful language, lamenting the inevitable delay of her reply, profeſſing herſelf extremely happy that ſhe could give the beſt account of Miſs Elizabeth, for whom ſhe had diſpatched a truſty friend, who would eſcort her from the only retreat it had been in her power to procure for her; and promiſed to wait on Sir Clifford in perſon, as ſoon as ſhe ſhould arrive, which would not perhaps be in leſs than a fortnight. This letter, to ſave delay, Laſſiter was to carry back with him, and forward to Byram Hall, as brought by a private conveyance from Swanſea.

Preſuming

Preſuming on the certainty of their ſucceſs, the parties next planned their own ſeveral advantages, having previouſly agreed that Mrs. Browne ſhould be made privy to the buſineſs, and promiſed a ſpecific ſum for her taciturnity. Lady Jemima had imagined that Laſſiter would be contented with large pay for his trouble, and felt not a little diſconcerted when he talked firſt of *going halves*, and then abating, of dividing the property into three portions, with one of which he would be content. It was her Ladyſhip's plan to compel her daughter to engage herſelf, in conſideration of her maternal endeavours, to make her a large allowance out of her income, whenever it ſhould be her's, and as the penalty of refuſal would be the diſcloſure of the ruinous ſecret, ſhe did not doubt that this would ſupply the want of efficacy in the contract of a minor; but Mr. Laſſiter was ſo ſtubborn in his demands, that he was utterly *impracticable*.

Each was ruined if they did not agree; a conſideration that was an admirable hint in their friendſhip. The lawyer talked high—the lady heſitated.

"I have one other propoſition to make," ſaid Laſſiter.

"What is it?" ſaid Lady Jemima, eagerly.

It was—and well did Laſſiter evince his knowledge of the world, when he made it to Lady Jemima Byram: it was no other than a propoſal of marriage to be had and holden between themſelves, by which their intereſts would be cemented, all diſpute about diviſion would be ended, and their happineſs inſured.

There was in Laſſiter's perſon and manner that which too often inclines the leſs-endued part of mankind to ſuppoſe themſelves conquered when they are only bul-

lied. Her Ladyſhip, it is true, was *abſolutely ſhocked*—ſure Mr. Laſſiter forgot either who *he was*, or *ſhe had been*. Did he not know her for the daughter of one Earl, and the ſiſter of another? Could he imagine ſhe would condeſcend to give her hand to a country attorney? All this was invincibly ſtrong argument, but the diſcuſſion, of two hours duration, annihilated it, and a ſecret treaty of alliance between the belligerent powers concluded eternal peace. The ſcruples that remained on her Ladyſhip's delicacy being entirely removed by Mr. Laſſiter's poſitive aſſurance, that, by what means he did not care to explain, he ſhould in a few months find himſelf in a ſituation to brave the beſt man in the country, and to *ſupport* as well as to *purchaſe* the diſtinction of a title.

Lady Jemima's next care was to write to her daughter Arabella, at the ſchool in Dublin, where ſhe had left her. Laſſiter found a meſſenger, one of his own

clerks, to go on the errand, and ſtrong was his temptation to give the fellow a ſum of money to run away with Miſs Arabella, and by marrying her to ruin her hopes from Sir Clifford; but as there was a chance that the old gentleman might in his infatuation forgive even this, or that Lady Jemima might have addreſs enough to find it out, and betray him, he ſuffered things to take their natural courſe for once, and Arabella was earneſtly conjured to return immediately to her mother, on buſineſs of ſingular urgency and importance.

The ſchool to which Arabella had been ſent, was, as œconomy dictated, far from *a firſt rate*; and the young lady was very ſoon reconciled to her removal, by finding there was much leſs compulſion to diligence, and much more liberty of action than had been deſcribed to her, as the lot of boarding-ſchool miſſes. There were but two circumſtances ſhe felt inclined to complain

complain of: the one was confinement to the houſe; the other was a limited appetite: for the firſt of theſe grievances ſhe found ſome conſolation in *friendſhip*; for the other there appeared at preſent no remedy.

The *friendſhip* ſhe had formed was with a ſcholar a year older than herſelf, but far more *aged* in experience of the world. She originated from London; and notwithſtanding the contradiction of an Iriſh education, ſhe talked largely of her family opulence and importance; and her parents having an humble connection with a great houſe, in the nurſery of which ſhe had been permitted to paſs part of her infancy, ſhe talked fluently of Lord Robert, Lady Anne, and Lady Frances; and prudently ſuppreſſing all circumſtances of degradation, ſhe charmed Miſs Arabella's heart, and made her think herſelf at home again.

This

This fair ſeducer had a brother, born with no better hopes than that of being at the next vacancy elected valet where his father reigned as butler, and his mother triumphed as houſekeeper. Having finiſhed his education, he had been ſent over to Ireland on a viſit of prudence and forecaſt to his grandfather, a ſmall dealer in whiſkey; and *fraternal affection* prompting him to beſtow much notice on his ſiſter and her friends, he took ſome pains to introduce himſelf amongſt them; which, as he poſſeſſed a very good perſon, and could admirably adopt the manner, *as well as clothes*, of his ſuperiors, was no difficult matter, where a lax government was the only impediment.

Soon learning who Miſs Byram was, and how much credit her condeſcending friendſhip reflected on his ſiſter, he concluded his fortune made if he could gain her attention; and this was no difficulty where he had occaſional acceſs, and while, in

in his abſence, his virtues and pretenſions were inceſſantly the theme of converſation. In ſhort, Arabella ſaw in his attachment the means of eſcaping from the only inconveniencies ſhe endured; and he and his ſiſter, not ſuppoſing the young lady's ſituation could be that of indigence, cheriſhed their good fortune as certain happineſs.

Every thing was in train for an elopement; and a day but one week diſtant was appointed for the happy purpoſe, when Lady Jemima's meſſenger arrived, and the governeſs of the ſchool, not willingly, prepared to give up her charge; but the bride elect was refractory—her dear Charles's ſcheme muſt be demoliſhed if ſhe departed, and ſhe had no means of informing him. Her governeſs, ſuppoſing her abſence might be more than temporary, and therefore injurious to her intereſts, forbore to urge the matter, when the young lady, expreſſing her fears of croſ-

ſing

fing the ſea at ſo bad a ſeaſon of the year, begged her voyage might be poſtponed for a few months. In one letter ſhe wrote her apprehenſions, in another (given ſecretly to the meſſenger) ſhe more openly diſcloſed her proſpects, in this language, with which the inſpiration of her paſſion, and the converſation of her friend, had furniſhed her:

"WILL my deareſt mother forgive, will ſhe feel for her unhappy daughter, who, ſhackled in the ſilver net of love, feels all its arrows drinking at her bleeding heart? Ah, madam! you have known what it is to love; but never, never can you have drank the ſoft waters of enthuſiaſtic paſſion to the degree of inebriating intoxication that has wounded your too-greatly bleſſed daughter. The attractions of my mind and perſon have animated ſome time ſince, with the pureſt flame, the ſentiments of a young gentleman, whoſe angelic ſiſter is my very ſelf. He, though

though gracing a ſphere of life in an orbit far ſuperior to my lowly lot, condeſcends with ſweet affability to declare his felicity on this bleſſed earth to be centered only in your daughter; but the dread of offending his relations, who are bent on marrying him to a young lady of diſtinguiſhed beauty and great fortune, obliges him to confine his paſſion to the chaſte abode of his divine thoughts: we therefore, my deareſt mother, breathe our mutual vows in ſecret, till that happy day arrives—and ſure arrive it will at laſt! though my longing eyes look yet for it in vain, when Hymen, in his purple robe, ſpotted with yellow, and with ſaffron torch, ſhall join our ſympathetic hearts by uniting our hands. This day, this fatal day, when the gordian knot of love ſhall faſten me to wedlock and happineſs ſublime, will be paſt, my adored mother, before this kiſſes your hands; and I ſhall have the felicity of preſenting to you, in ſilken bonds, the glorious victim love has con-

conſecrated to mutual felicity. Inſtantly as we are one, we ſhall fly to your feet, and implore a bleſſing on our holy vows. If you remember what it is to love, you will, I am ſure, forgive this delay, and ſtill allow me to ſubſcribe myſelf, till death, —O! 'tis the laſt time, perhaps, I ſhall ſign my virgin name as

Your moſt dutiful and affectionate

A. BYRAM."

Lady Jemima had, with no other alleviation of her ſolitude than Mr. Laſſiter's wooing viſits, waited impatiently the return of this ſecond embaſſy; and great was her mortification to receive, inſtead of Miſs Arabella, ſuch a meſs of nonſenſe as her metaphorical rhapſody. She muttered to herſelf *ſhackles—arrows—waters—orbit—vows—Hymen--purple ſpotted with yellow—ſaffron torch—wedlock—glorious victim*; and then fully convinced that, however Arabella's heart was fitted for intrigue, her head was not to be relied on,

on, ſhe toſt the letter with contempt into the fire, and ſelt at ſea again.

Laſſiter's clerk had been ſo expeditious, that only ten days of the fortnight were expired, and Lady Jemima began, before ſhe could ſummon her privy counſellor, to deliberate on her next manœuvre. Her ill ſucceſs, though it diſtreſſed, did not diſcourage her; her ſpirit roſe under oppreſſion, and her only difficulty was to find ſome uſurper to ſet up. She could contemplate with philoſophic temper the circumſtances of her two daughters; one was, ſhe concluded, dead; the other, perhaps, was ruined; for the experienced matron had little faith in Hymen's purple and yellow; but the greateſt of all miſery was, that ſhe had not the means of impoſing on Sir Clifford; and without that, ſhe conſidered it as impoſſible to cheat him.

In the diſtraction of her mind, the *true* Elizabeth occurred to her remembrance; and

and with all the ſincerity of defeated project, ſhe repented her having exiled her. Her deprivation of all other hope made her almoſt confident, that from Elizabeth's native generoſity ſhe might have expected greater advantage than from the deception of her own daughter. She ſaw in an inſtant, that the plain path would have been the ſhorteſt and the ſafeſt; and for the firſt time in her life her reaſon reflected her to herſelf in the image of a fool.

Was it too late yet to repair her error? was the queſtion next prompted by the exigency of her diſtreſs. No; ſhe thought one effort might ſave her, could ſhe but find a third meſſenger. It was poſſible Mrs. Haccombe might not have ſent Elizabeth to the Indies; the young woman's particular averſion to the ſcheme might have defeated it: there was juſt a probability that ſhe might be in England: a query to Mrs. Haccombe would at leaſt aſcertain it, and on this ſhe reſolved; but

no

no other mode of conveyance than the poſt preſenting itſelf, ſhe was forced to make uſe of that, and wait a return.

Laſſiter, alarmed by his meſſenger's report, flew inſtantly to Coventry: his coadjutor was compelled to tell him of the new plan ſhe had adopted: he condemned it as deſperate, though he was convinced there might be a chance not thought on before, becauſe not fully revealed to him, of finding Miſs Elizabeth, whoſe coming he inſtantly perceived would be ruin to him. He ſaw that Lady Jemima and Elizabeth would join forces; and even ſhould he, by inveſtigating his ſuſpicions reſpecting the newly-married Lady Armathwaite, place all parties accidentally in their rightful ſituations, ſtill there would no other advantage redound to himſelf than that of throwing out Lady Jemima; for of the pleaſure of doing juſtice, it cannot be ſuppoſed Mr. Laſſiter could have any idea.

He

He paced the apartment in great commotion, more than half inclined to vent his anger againſt Lady Jemima for her precipitancy; but prudence reſtrained his temper, and he ſaw it would be wiſer to ſecure her fidelity by pacific meaſures: he, therefore, with implied threats, but gentle language, urged her Ladyſhip's immediately fulfilling the matrimonial promiſe ſhe had given him; and ſhe, hampered on all ſides, and uncertain of all things, but her danger, found it moſt for her advantage to acquieſce.

It was of the utmoſt importance that the wedding, whenever it took place, ſhould be ſecret; and the great Mr. Laſſiter could not flatter himſelf, that any act of his done in the county of his reſidence, or in thoſe adjoining to it, could be unnoticed. A journey to London was the beſt expedient. It was inſtantly put in practice; and in three days the parties returned to their reſpective abodes, ſeparated by

by their unfathomable prudence, but for ever conjoined by the bonds of matrimony.

On her return, the ſtill-anxious bride found a letter from Mrs. Haccombe, briefly informing her, that after a ſeries of *the moſt abandoned conduct*, Miſs Lamorne had run away from the ſhip that ſhould have carried her out, and had ſince that time been harboured by the Counteſs of Cottiſbrooke.

Lady Jemima, though never admitted into the circles of Lady Cottiſbrooke, knew enough of her character to be perſuaded that, unleſs groſsly deceived, ſhe could not harbour perſons of *abandoned conduct*; nor could ſhe, though inclined to depreciate, ſo far delude herſelf as to believe Elizabeth's conduct could deſerve the odious epithet of abandoned. Her morality, however, was entirely out of the queſtion in the preſent caſe; and ſhe accordingly, but again without conſulting Laſſiter, wrote to *Miſs Lamorne, at the Counteſs of Cottiſbrooke's, London.*

CHAP. V.

THE kindneſs of the Blyford family, and the cordial regret Lady Cottiſbrooke had expreſſed at parting, afforded Peregrina every hope and conſolation, that could aid her reaſon in reconciling her to the exile her prudence had ſuggeſted; and in a few days, having received a very kind and ſatisfactory letter from the Counteſs, ſhe ceaſed to feel anxious for Hamilton's conſtancy. Conſidering the generous offer made her by the incomparable Ami Bonange, as an appeal to her ſincerity, ſhe aimed at the inveſtigation of her own heart and its propenſities; and feeling that ſhe could really reſt contented and be *comparatively* happy, provided ſhe were aſſured of the welfare of her noble friends

friends at Margate, and being more than half perſuaded that ſhe could, without regret, hear that Captain Courtland had married to the ſatisfaction of his mother and family, ſhe had ingenuouſneſs enough to confeſs to herſelf, that this placid diſpoſition was nearer of kin to friendſhip than to love, and was therefore convinced, ſhe had no title to the proffered generoſity of her incognito guardian: ſhe therefore, at her firſt leiſure, wrote from Frandiſton Park to Ami, acknowledging, with the utmoſt gratitude, his unmerited goodneſs; but declining all right to it, as neceſſary to her peace.

Her ſituation with her new friends was ſuch as took away all regret for the cauſe, and afforded her a pleaſure, almoſt novel, that of purſuing, with every encouragement, her favourite occupations. Mrs. Blyford, delighted with her accompliſhments, and the diffidence which accompanied them, had no greater pleaſure than

in furthering her progreſs; and the elder young ladies, whoſe religious reſtrictions had prevented their entering the world in purſuit of its elegances, were happy to profit by her attainments. Their apartment was therefore, till dinner-time, a ſpecies of academy; and their evenings were ſpent either in viſits in the neighbourhood, with company at home, or in a domeſtic circle where converſation never flagged, becauſe it was never forced; where every one was at liberty to follow their own purſuit, to requeſt information, or to communicate knowledge.

Martha Blyford, the eldeſt of theſe amiable girls, was ſimplicity itſelf, as far as ſimplicity conſiſts with good ſenſe and the moſt guarded conduct, wherever that conduct was liable to cenſure. In her gay moments, for though a Quaker ſhe was gay, no heart could wear leſs diſguiſe —none ever needed it leſs; and having not yet been deceived, ſhe knew not that any one

one could attempt deceiving her. She had never experienced ſo great a pleaſure as that of Peregrina's company; ſhe was aſſiduous to deſerve her friendſhip; and cold indeed muſt have been that heart which could deny admiſſion to ſuch an affection as Martha Blyford's.

Her perſon was lovely, her countenance ingenuous; her features were animated, and a moſt faithful index to her mind. It was from them that Peregrina, in leſs than a fortnight, learnt that Martha was not quite the happy girl ſhe ſtrove to appear. She dared not inquire, but ſhe was hurt to ſee every day increaſing teſtimonials of ſorrow, and, ſhe feared, of rapidly declining health, in her aſpect.

It was impoſſible, by general expreſſions of concern, or the moſt minute as well as affectionate queries, to obtain from her any ſatisfaction: ſhe was grateful for Miſs Lamorne's attention—ſhe ſmiled, and aſſured

her her looks were not to be relied on, if they did not beſpeak her well and happy.

Peregrina would have perſuaded herſelf, that her own anxiety miſled her; but Mrs. Blyford grew alarmed at Martha's evidently-forced cheerfulneſs. Peregrina endeavoured to allay her fears, and at the ſame time ſet herſelf more earneſtly to obtain the young lady's confidence. But all her endeavours were fruitleſs, till one morning, when the cheering influence of an autumn ſun having invited them to ſtroll together to the neighbouring village, in their return home, they took the path over the churchyard, where Martha's keen ſight was caught by a ſtone newly erected to the memory of a young woman of the pariſh, who was ſaid to have died of a lingering illneſs at the age of eighteen. She read the ſimple biography with intereſt and energy, and then ſaid, as to herſelf, "*I* am not eighteen yet."

"I am ſorry to hear you make that obſervation," ſaid her companion, who had narrowly watched her. "What reſemblance can there be between your ſituation and that of this young perſon?"

"O none—but why do thee aſk?"

"Becauſe, my dear Martha, you ſeemed to think of *yourſelf* when you read the inſcription."

"I never hear of a young perſon's dying of a lingering illneſs, without thinking of myſelf."

"Are you apprehenſive it will be your lot?"

"I do not know; but, dear Peregrina, I was acquainted with that young woman; ſhe was not of our ſociety, but thee never knew a better creature—ſhe loſt her life by nurſing ſome ſick relations, who reco-

vered only by her care, and my mother's goodneſs."

"Well, but, my dear, why then ſhould you particularly compare her uncommon fate with your ſituation?—ſhe was ſingularly; unfortunate.'

"No, no, Peregrina, not unfortunate, but very, very happy—ſhe muſt, I am ſure, be happy; ſomething within me tells me ſo; and I am certain ſhe muſt have gone to all thoſe ſhe loved, and that loved her. It was a happineſs for *her* to die!"

"And is it not for all?"

"No, no, thee cannot think ſo, I am ſure."

"For all but the wicked, I mean."

"Yes; but there may be people *not wicked*, who yet have cauſe to fear puniſhment, for being weak and obſtinate."

"That

" That cannot be your caſe, my dear Martha."

" O yes; thee can have no acquaintance with me yet—thee would hate me. I am weak and obſtinate—I wiſh for what cannot be—I am diſcontented, and very weak, nay almoſt wicked."

" Why, what do you wiſh for?—Let me judge how far it is unreaſonable."

" Why, now, deareſt Peregrina—pray never tell—I wiſh I was not a Quaker."

" Well, that is no very great ſin; if your wiſh ariſes from reflection and from conſcience, why do you not communicate it to Mr. Blyford? no one can be more liberal in religious opinions."

" No, no—it is not conſcience, indeed. Can it be conſcience that makes me diſcontented, when I have every thing this

world can give me?—I have the kindeſt parents poſſible; I love my brothers and ſiſters; I have thee for my friend; and yet I am ſo diſcontented, that I am certain if I paſs this winter as I have paſſed the autumn, I ſhall never ſee the ſpring; and is not that unpardonable folly? If I could but get over this—if I could but break my ſtubborn ſpirit, I ſhould have no more fear of dying than that young woman."

"But what hinders your overcoming this diſcontented diſpoſition? Do you uſe your endeavours?"

"Indeed I do—I do aſſure thee I have not looked at it once ſince I came home."

"Looked at what?"

"O, Peregrina Lamorne, aſk me nothing further! thee ſees how little I have the command of myſelf. Pity me, if thee can;

can; I die if thee blame me, and yet thee muſt blame me."

The tears guſhed from Martha's eyes; and Peregrina forbore all farther inquiry, contenting herſelf, in their way home, with endeavours to re-aſſure her companion, and indulging her own gueſſes.

Her friendly conſolations were not loſt; for though Martha would then diſcloſe no more, ſhe invited her friend to meet her in the duſk of the evening, in her own apartment, and promiſed there to tell her griefs.

Peregrina was at a loſs to decide on what courſe ſhe ſhould take to eaſe Mrs. Blyford's hourly-increaſing anxiety. She was almoſt tempted to give her notice of the time when the important ſecret was to be revealed; but as their religious peculiarities were included in poor Martha's difficulties, ſhe feared hazarding for her the

favour of her parents, in an attempt to ſerve her; ſhe, therefore, truſted to what ſhe ſhould be able to do for her, when fully informed of her diſtreſſes; and attended punctually at the hour appointed, to hear them; but as ſhe was making her way to Miſs Blyford's apartments, ſhe met her maid, with an excuſe from her, that having a bad head-ache ſhe could not indulge herſelf with her company.

But Peregrina was too ſincerely actuated by a deſire to render her ſervice, to attend to an excuſe, which ſhe knew originated only in Martha's reluctance to unboſom herſelf. She ventured circumſpectly into her room, and found her in the deepeſt dejection, which was interrupted only by tears and reproaches on her own folly.

"I cannot bear to ſee you thus," ſaid Peregrina; "you call me your friend, my Martha, and you treat me like your greateſt enemy. Unleſs you will perform your pro-

miſe to me, without reſerve, I muſt diſcharge my duty to Mr. and Mrs. Blyford, by telling them what you this morning told me."

" Thee would not, I am certain," ſhe replied, with tolerable compoſure. " I have thought of my folly, in indulging this ſpirit of diſcontent, and of my greater folly in revealing it. Were I to perform my promiſe to thee, Peregrina, I know thee would tell my father and mother, in hopes to make me happy; for thee art an angel of goodneſs: but I ſhould then hate myſelf, even if they could and would do every thing poſſible for me. I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf for being ſo childiſh. Pray, then, releaſe me from my promiſe; it was a raſh one; and on my part I promiſe thee to ſtrive to live and be content: and if thee does not own, in a few days, that I am better, then I will tell thee all, and thee ſhall hate me."

Peregrina, though ſhe reluctantly gave up her hope of hearing Martha's ſorrows, and of contributing to her relief, could not but admire the greatneſs of her mind; and finding it impoſſible to ſhake her reſolution, ſhe took the oppoſite method of encouraging her exertions to regain her peace, and hoped they would not prove ineffectual.

CHAP. VI.

COULD any thing have diveſted Peregrina's heart of its ſocialſy mpathies, and centered its concerns in herſelf, it would have been the following letter which ſhe received the next day:

"I HAVE done, I hope, my duty; I have riſqued my heart's beſt intereſt. Surely more cannot be required of me.

"You aſſure me, my Peregrina, and who can doubt language ſo ſincere? that gratitude and friendſhip are the predominant ſentiments you feel for Courtland; you ſay that were worldly conſiderations to induce you to liſten to his paſſion, you ſhould ſtill feel hurt at the diſparity of your ſituations.

ſituations. Perhaps this is carrying the point of delicacy a little too far. I ſhall only underſtand you, as meaning by it, that your reaſon is unclouded by the prejudices of love.

" The greateſt pleaſure I ever experienced was conveyed to me in that part of your ingenuous letter, which reſts a large ſhare of your regard for Courtland on the temporary ſuppoſition, that he and Ami Bonange were the ſame perſon. May an equal degree of ingenuouſneſs, on my part, be but half as acceptable to you !

" As yet you muſt know me only as your good genius; a farther communication depends ſolely on yourſelf. But ſuppoſe me not, I beſeech you, a being of another world, or one who penetrates myſteries or ſees futurities. Love has been my motive, accident has been my friend; my aim is to ſhield from the malice and misfortunes of the world, heaven's beſt

gift

gift to man; and ſhould I ſucceed in obtaining poſſeſſion of your heart, I will die to prove my title to it.

" How can I recommend myſelf, thus veiled? how little likely am I to recommend myſelf, when I ſhall unveil! I would not have your reaſon or judgment my enemy, yet their ſuffrage would not content me; by their decrees, however, I muſt abide; for to them only can I appeal.

" The ſmall ſervices I have hitherto been able to render you, can convince you of nothing more than my regard for you; and this regard may be ſtripped of all merit by being ſelfiſh. I may have ſaved you from others, to ſecure you to myſelf. Perhaps I have been leſs diſintereſted than I ought to have been—I have no means of proving the contrary.

" What ſituation of life would content you, I can judge only from my general know-

knowledge of your opinions; whether mine would meet your wiſhes is as doubtful; but you have an option, and may exerciſe it without endangering my friendſhip for you.

" I can promiſe you little of the gewgaw of life; but its ſolid comforts are within my power. I make no prepoſterous propoſition—I offer you no *paſtoral* felicities, no Arcadian delights—a home, where love ſhall ever welcome you, peace ſhall ſoothe you, and friendſhip ſhall protect you, is, next to an honeſt heart, my beſt poſſeſſion. The cares of life, if they cannot be repelled, ſhall be leſſened by participation. We will live to the ſatisfaction of virtuous minds, and ſtrive to merit the favour of heaven. Our ſuperfluities ſhall bleſs the needy; our example ſhall encourage morality; and, while we deſpiſe not the elegancies of life, we will remain untainted by its luxuries.

" Such

" Such are my views; could you but adopt them! You alone are formed to aid them—they vaniſh if you oppoſe them.

" It would be preſumption; nay, it would be to ſuppoſe a deficiency of ſelf regard, were I to conclude you ſo wholly uninfluenced by the judgment of the world, as to be indifferent to the external circumſtances of the man you give your hand to. Seven years in the difference of our ages—in perſon, I believe I rank with thoſe which " nature makes by thouſands, and ſets no mark upon them." Could I flatter myſelf I had made any impreſſion on your memory, I ſhould refer you for the origin of our acquaintance, to a day, nearly two years ago, when, in company with three other gentlemen, I met Mr. Byram and yourſelf on horſeback, about two miles from the place you then reſided at. One of my friends ſtopped to ſpeak to Mr. Byram —I gazed on you, but you did not perceive it; and as I was on my way to quit

the

the country, I could get no acceſs to you. Muſt I *call* it chance that has again placed you within my reach? No, rather call it Providence, and diſpoſe yourſelf to fulfill its decrees.

"Is this preſuming too far on your goodneſs? Will you think it excuſed by your condeſcenſion in ſaying, that even did your heart plead for Courtland, you muſt heſitate before you relinquiſhed the tutelar friendſhip of

"Your moſt devoted,

"AMI BONANGE."

No one of the viciſſitudes of Peregrina's life had produced on her ſuch a diſtraction of mind, as the unexpected avowal of this letter. It called her, as it were, to a new ſtate of being; ſhe could no longer aſk herſelf, where ſhould *ſhe* find friends? when Providence, from ſo trivial an event, an event which had ſcarcely left any trace upon

upon her memory, had raiſed her up ſo powerful and ſo ineſtimable a friend and protector, whoſe vigilance ſhe had always felt as a ſupreme obligation, and whoſe attachment ſhe was too grateful to diſregard; but, ſtill reflecting on the myſtery in which he clouded himſelf, and on the advantage her acquieſcence in it gave him, ſhe could not think of accepting implicitly a propoſal, the merit of which could be judged of only by the event.

A poſtſcript to the letter requeſted a ſpeedy anſwer, addreſſed to a coffee-houſe near Weſtminſter bridge; and thither, by the return of the poſt, ſhe ſent this brief anſwer:

"Let me intreat you to diſcloſe yourſelf, if you wiſh for any thing farther than the reſpect and gratitude of

"Your eternally obliged

"P. L."

CHAP. VII.

SEVERAL days of extreme diſquietude ſucceeded to the pleaſure Ami's letter had given Peregrina; and, to ſave herſelf from the ſhock of diſappointment ſhe expected would be her lot, ſhe endeavoured to anticipate it, and to divert her thoughts by attention to lovely Martha Blyford, who really ſeemed to have profited by the dilemma ſhe had reduced herſelf to. The family were ſtill kind to their gueſt—Lady Cottiſbrooke, who was removed to town, wrote frequently and cordially. Lady Almerina was quite an altered being, grateful to Peregrina, and reſpectful to Lady Cottiſbrooke. The Earl was diſpoſed to think lightly of her defeated elopement. Hamilton's embarkation was countermanded,

manded, and he was in high ſpirits, flirting with every lady who came in his way. In ſhort, could Peregrina have heard news of the two friends ſhe had met at Margate, Mr. Halnaby and Mrs. *Birram*, the comfort of her friends would, in ſome meaſure, have counterbalanced her private uneaſineſs.

At length, after long waiting, which had ſcarcely at all diminiſhed her anxiety, ſhe received another letter from Ami Bonange; but it was brief, and without noticing her requeſt, as myſterious as ever—it told her only, that Lady Jemima Byram was in queſt of her, and adviſed her, as ſhe valued her ſafety or reputation, to be on her guard, and to pay no heed to any art ſhe might uſe to ſeduce her from her friends.

This, though mortifying, was important. She had by the next poſt but two, a letter from Lady Cottiſbrooke, incloſing one from Lady Jemima. It contained a very

very kind and very earneſt requeſt to her immediately to meet her at Coventry, on buſineſs of the utmoſt importance to her, the purport of which, ſhe had not then time to explain; but Peregrina was rendered, though indeed now *unjuſtly*, ſuſpicious, and ſhe returned no anſwer.

Ami Bonange wrote ſoon again on the ſubject of his more intereſting letter, lamenting the neceſſity he was under of remaining a ſhort time longer *in enigma*; and in language otherwiſe unreſerved, evincing the moſt honourable attachment to the object of his care, who far from being inſenſible to his profeſſions, began to grow extremely penſive without feeling melancholy, and to think that in the delight of being ſincerely beloved by one whoſe merit warranted a return from her, ſhe ſhould find an abundant compenſation for all the ills ſhe had endured.

Her

Her muſing diſpoſition was remarked, but not avowedly by any, except Martha Blyford, who ſeemed almoſt to wiſh Peregrina ſo far on equal terms with her as to wear an oppreſſed heart. This certainly appeared neceſſary to her confidence in her; and to gain the cauſe of Peregrina's dejection, ſhe ſo far revealed her own, as to diſcover that it originated in the attentions of one of the other ſex, with whom ſhe had formed an intimacy while on a viſit to ſome friends the preceding winter. Diſpoſed as Martha was to exculpate the young man, and charge herſelf with credulity and preſumption, his conduct appeared reprehenſible: he had been much at the houſe ſhe was at; he had improved every opportunity of conciliating her regard; and even if it could be ſuppoſed that a ſimple girl had taken nonſenſe for ſincerity, ſtill he could not be wholly acquitted of an intention to miſlead her; for he had talked away all the obſtacles their religious diſparity preſented, and had

ſolemnly

ſolemnly aſſured her of his deſign to make a perſonal application to her father, on the ſtrength of which ſhe had accepted his picture.

It appeared that on her return home he had diſcontinued every attention, and by his conduct ſhewn he thought no more of her; and ſhe, conſidering herſelf rather than him to blame, in having encouraged him, had forborne every complaint, and was, though unequal to the ſtruggle, diſpoſed to ſubmit. Who this capricious lover was, where ſhe had met with him, or what had been his fate, Miſs Blyford would on no perſuaſions diſcloſe; nor would ſhe ſhew the picture, though Peregrina obſerved there was little danger of diſcovery, in ſo far gratifying her curioſity, as to ſhew what features and complexion had pleaſed her.

She ſeemed relieved by thus far diſburthening her heart, though ſhe failed in pre-

prevailing on her friend to be equally communicative; and Peregrina ſaw it was in vain to exert herſelf for the injured girl, as the oppoſition would be ſtronger from her lover than from her parents. But ſhe at every opportunity watched for ſome new circumſtance of her ſorrows from the lips of the ſufferer; and at laſt having learnt as an argument for her ſubmiſſion, that the proſpect of her happineſs was ſtill farther oppoſed than by the young man's being of the Church of England, by diſparity of ſituation, and above all by his being a ſoldier! ſhe ſaw no hope for poor Martha, who frequently ſuggeſted as an excuſe for the volatility that had poiſoned her peace, the circumſtance of her being a Quaker.

From Mrs. Blyford, Peregrina learnt that it was at Norwich that her daughter had paſſed the winter; and the ſuſpicion this, and her knowledge of ſome previous circumſtances excited, was ſoon after confirmed by Martha's want of caution in

telling Peregrina that *ſhe* was no ſtranger to the perſon of her lover. "Then," replied her friend, "you can keep me in ignorance no longer—it is—it can be only Captain Courtland, and from my heart I pity you."

The gueſs was right, and Martha ſeeing it impoſſible to retract, in ſilence and tears permitted Peregrina to urge every topic of conſolation that her affection and ingenuity ſuggeſted. To encourage her was to deceive her, for Hamilton had but too plainly ſhewn the inſtability, if not the coquetry of his amours. As it might have occaſioned the ſweet girl ſtill greater pain to know that in her confidante ſhe had had a rival, ſhe forbore mentioning Courtland's conduct towards herſelf, and confined her endeavours to the arming Martha's pride againſt her paſſion.

But, as ſoon as ſhe was at liberty, ſhe wrote to Lady Cottiſbrooke, whom ſhe knew ſhe

ſhe could truſt, a full account of the miſchief Hamilton had occaſioned, and its probable conſequences. She expatiated on the uncommon prudence of Miſs Blyford, who, while at Margate, where Captain Courtland occaſionally met her, had never betrayed her feelings; and ſhe could not, though ſhe knew his mother's partiality, forbear animadverting on his caprice and inſenſibility.

The month of November was far advanced when ſhe wrote on this ſubject to Lady Cottiſbrooke; and ſhe was impatiently waiting in ſecret an anſwer, endeavouring to cheer drooping Martha by every aſſiduity of friendſhip, when the poor girl's heart was afreſh wounded by the neceſſity of parting with the ſervant who had brought her up, and whoſe age and infirmities made it neceſſary that ſhe ſhould be diſcharged from all labor. The woman having expreſſed a wiſh to retire to her own country and friends, a ſucceſ-

ſor had been ſought, and one very well recommended, as a widow who had lived well, and ſuffered by misfortunes, was hired by a friend of Mrs. Blyford for her; and now to the no ſmall diſcomfort of the Miſs Blyfords, who could like nobody after old Margaret, ſhe came to her place, three days ſervice in which convinced the family that ſhe had but ſmall pretenſions to the excellent character given of her; for ſhe was, to the laſt degree, preſuming and intruding, qualities which, in ſpite of the levelling doctrines of Quakeriſm, few Quakers are inclined to applaud.

It was part of her buſineſs to attend Miſs Lamorne, and conſidering her as perhaps of a rank little ſuperior to her own, ſhe was never backward to aſſiſt her with her advice and obſervations. This Peregrina bore with patience and good humour; but Miſs Blyford, prejudiced againſt her, could not endure it.

She was often ſecretly offended at her critiques on her works, her drawings, &c. and nothing induced her to tolerate it, but Peregrina's reminding her that the woman had been unfortunate. Believing that the ignorant creature meant well, ſhe endeavoured to learn from her ſo much of her ſtory as might, when again related, intereſt Miſs Blyford for her; but here Sarah's pride oppoſed the good intention, and ſhe would reveal nothing.

Miſs Blyford, being permitted by her parents to vary her employments by any elegant purſuit, was very deſirous of painting miniatures, and to facilitate her progreſs, which was more than equal to the inſtruction ſhe had had, Peregrina offered to lend her the miniature of her mother, which ſhe had received from Mr. Byram on his death-bed. The ivory oval was duly formed, and the friends were deeply engaged in the buſineſs of fixing eyes, noſe, and mouth, when Sarah coming

into the room, could not reſtrain her curioſity, but with expreſſions of vulgar admiration came up to the table, and taking up the miniature, which was to be copied, ſhe cried out, "Good Lord! why, I am ſure this is Joan."

"*Joan!*" repeated Miſs Blyford, ſomewhat ſtiffly, "I wiſh, Sarah, thee would learn a little more caution in ſpeaking. Thee may fancy this like ſome friend, but thee muſt be miſtaken; for this is friend Lamorne's mother."

"What is it you mean, Sarah?" ſaid Peregrina, "ſure you did not know my mother!"

"No, Ma'am, I did not ſay I knowed your mother; only that picture, I am ſure, and I could ſwear to, is Joan; it was drawed, I am *potiſive*, when ſhe lived with us."

"For

"For heaven's ſake, who is Joan?" anſwered Peregrina; "you keep me on the rack, Sarah."

"Rack or unrack," retorted Sarah ſaucily, "I could ſwear it to be Joan; why, it is the very moral of her."

"But only tell us who thee means by Joan," ſaid Miſs Blyford mildly; "we know nothing of Joan. Did thee ſay ſhe lived with thee?"

"What, Miſs, I ſuppoſe you want to *penerate* into my family ſecrets; but though I am poor now, I am a gentlewoman born and bred; and I ſha'n't ſet myſelf up to be a laughing-ſtock for you, nor nobody."

She then flounced out of the room, and Miſs Blyford, ſeeing Peregrina's agitation, though ſhe knew not the cauſe, immediately went to her mother to com-

plain of Sarah's rudeneſs, while ſhe who it moſt affected, could ſcarcely be reſtrained from following the maid, and begging a farther explanation.

Mrs. Blyford returned almoſt immediately with her daughter, and began to apologiſe to her gueſt for the preſumption of her ſervant; but Peregrina aſſuring her friends that ſhe was far from feeling it as an affront, and that it might aſſiſt her in diſcovering a parent ſhe had never had the felicity of knowing, Mrs. Blyford, without farther inquiry, cheerfully ordered Sarah to be called, and by gentle words ſtrove to ſmooth the harſhneſs of her reſentment for the indignity ſhe conceived offered her by the young ladies.

Nothing leſs than a bribe could ſtop the inundating eloquence of her anger; but once appeaſed, ſhe with much preface, and words of great import as to her *aboriginal* grandeur, was proceeding to ſay, that

that her father's name was Rufford, and that he was a clergyman in Berkſhire;—when Peregrina recollecting that as the name her father in his dying moments had mentioned, dropped on her knees before the homely oracle, and with ſcarcely breath to articulate her wiſhes, beſought her to tell her in a moment all ſhe knew of her mother.

"Let me take Sarah into another room, my dear," ſaid Mrs. Blyford, tenderly ſeating and ſupporting her in her chair.

"O no," ſaid Peregrina, "let me hear directly who was the Joan ſhe ſpeaks of?"

"Why, Joan was Joan; that's all I know of the matter," anſwered Sarah huffingly—"Mercy on me, what am I to be *terrogated* juſt for all the world as if I was before a *jus pece*?"

"No, no, good Sarah," ſaid Peregrina, "only tell me what was my mother's name."

"Why Joan, to be ſure."

"But her ſurname?"

"Doveridge—Joanna Doveridge ſhe was chriſtened, I believe."

"And who did ſhe marry?" ſaid Mrs. Blyford."

"Why, I did not ſay ſhe married any body.

"Ah!" ſighed Peregrina, "ſo I feared. You ſay ſhe lived with you—as a ſervant, I ſuppoſe."

"No, not quite ſo *menial* as a ſervant; but ſhe had very little money; ſhe had but one thouſand pounds, and I had three; and

and ſhe was as clumſy a creature as ever you ſet your eyes on, and ſo proud—mercy on me! I uſed to think, Well, Miſs, if all poor lords' daughters are ſo proud, I wiſh they may all go to the—old gentleman!"

"A lord's daughter!" reiterated Peregrina; "Who is it then you talk of Sarah? *my* mother could be no lord's daughter."

"I don't know, Miſs, who *your* mother might be; but *mine* was a gentlewoman, and never demeaned by *loping* with fellows, like Joan."

"Go, go away, Sarah," ſaid Mrs. Blyford; "either anſwer properly ſuch queſtions as thee is aſked, or thee ſhall be diſmiſſed from my ſervice."

It was now become impoſſible to get a word of farther information from the en-

raged miſconception of one who, never either a reaſonable or a benevolent being, was confuſed by her ſuſpicions, and exaſperated by her ill ſucceſs in the world; for Miſs Rufford, ſoon after the death of her father, had completed the climax of her folly, by beſtowing herſelf and her three thouſand pounds upon a man whom ſhe knew only by his own report, and had become acquainted with in a ſtage-coach. His conjugal attentions had laſted no longer than from the early hour of wedlock till the cloſe of the evening, in which time he had had addreſs enough to ſecure the whole of her property, even to her wardrobe; and having performed this important matter, he left the bride with her mother and retired to his native city, York, to ſhare the fruit of his induſtry with a wife to whom ſimilarity of talents and diſpoſition had for ſome years kept him faithful. Miſs Rufford, then ſtyling herſelf Mrs. Earle, betook herſelf in dudgeon to her helpleſs mother, who allowed her

to

to participate the ſcanty pittance the intereſt of her friends had raiſed for her; and the old lady, having lived till within a few months of this time, it was but now that the daughter had found it neceſſary to ſhift for herſelf. A friend of Mrs. Blyford's, who knew and compaſſionated the helpleſs patience of the mother, had endeavoured to eaſe her anxiety on her death-bed, by promiſing ſhe would not neglect her daughter; and in her regard for the deceaſed, ſhe carried her friendſhip for the living to an exceſs of injuſtice, by vouching for her merits beyond what her experience warranted; and thus Miſs Rufford, who with much difficulty could brook the idea of ſervitude, was placed in a ſituation which, had her wits increaſed with her misfortunes, might have averted the conſequences of her unpardonable indiſcretion.

But a temper ſo unmanageable could be curbed only by fear; and relying wholly

wholly on the friendſhip that had placed her thus happily, ſhe forgot that her own endeavours were neceſſary to the maintaining her poſt; and whatever change in her name and condition this fooliſh woman had experienced, or might experience, ſhe was and ſhe would be Miſs Rufford ſtill. Her reſtive temper rendered the little ſhe had communicated to Peregrina only agonizing; and ſhe appeared too much delighted with the power of tormenting to be prevailed on to relinquiſh it. Mrs. Blyford diſmiſſed her from her preſence, and then attempted to calm the exceſſive perturbation of her young friend, by aſſuring her, that on Mr. Blyford's return home, which would be in a couple of hours, ſome means ſhould be found to overcome the obſtinacy of Sarah.

CHAP. VIII.

It was now become almoſt neceſſary, that Mrs. Blyford ſhould be entruſted with more of Peregrina's hiſtory than any of her former friends had known; and where ſhe had met with ſuch kindneſs, and ſaw ſuch reſpect paid to moral integrity, ſhe had little to oppoſe her confidence. Neither Mrs. Blyford nor Martha, intereſted as they appeared for *friend Lamorne*, indulged the leaſt degree of curioſity after Sarah was diſmiſſed. Peregrina ſat weeping; and her ſorrow was interrupted only by their kind and judicious efforts to ſoothe its agitations. In broken accents, and with tears that could not be ſuppreſſed, ſhe thanked them for their goodneſs, and ſaid:

"It

"It is fit, my dear ladies, that you ſhould know ſomething more of my ſituation; it would be an unhappy one, were it not for the extraordinary friendſhip I have met with; and I could never have troubled any one with my misfortunes—"

"Do not call it *troubling*," interrupted Martha, in a convulſed voice, "I knew thee was unhappy, but I dared not ever aſk thee."

"Do not, I pray thee, my love," Mrs. Blyford interpoſed, "imagine that we would take advantage of this accident to indulge our curioſity. Thee ſhall talk to Sarah alone, perhaps thee can perſuade her."

"My dear Madam," anſwered Peregrina, "you are indeed very indulgent; but it will be pleaſing to me to think ſuch friends know me for what I am. Sarah talks of my mother, if it be my mother,

in

in terms that I can derive no credit from. I fear, from what ſhe ſays of her rank in life, that ſhe muſt have erred voluntarily, and then why ſhould I wiſh to know more of her?"

Mrs. Blyford adviſed her to draw no concluſion till ſhe had farther information; and Peregrina, a little encouraged, proceeded:

"When I firſt remember myſelf, I lived at Mr. Byram's ſeat at Balla-craig, in the north of Ireland—

"*Byram?*" ſaid Mrs. Blyford; "Was the Mrs. Byram who was at Margate any relative of his?"

"I believe not; I underſtand her name was *Byron*, for ſhe was generally called *Birron*."

"I interrupted thee; go on."

"Mr.

" Mr. Byram and his wife, Lady Jemima, and their two children, were frequently at Balla-craig, and Mr. Byram always called me his child, and treated me as such. I remember inquiring of my nurse why I had not a mama as well as the Miss Byrams; and she told me my mama was a naughty woman, and gone to the *pit-hole*. My curiosity was not satisfied; and when I was about seven years old, I remember asking Mr. Byram who was my mama? I have a perfect recollection of his taking me in his arms, and saying with great emotion, 'You have no mama, my love; but I will be papa and mama to you.' I then used to interrogate my governess, who, I really believe, could give me no insight into the mystery: she conjectured that my mother had either treated Mr. Byram perfidiously, or was dead; but advised me rather to rest satisfied in ignorance than to hazard Mr. Byram's favour, or depress his spirits by my inquiries. I obeyed her; for I reverenced her opinion,

and

and was convinced of her prudence. I endeavoured to be content with the kindneſs I experienced from Mr. Byram, which nothing could exceed; and as I had all my life been impreſſed with the idea that I exiſted only by ſufferance, I was little diſpoſed to competition with the Miſs Byrams, or to complain of the confinement I lived in. I was happy till I was ſixteen, when my excellent governeſs died, and I was overwhelmed with grief; yet even then I felt with double force what I owed to Mr. Byram's goodneſs, which increaſed towards me on that event; but ſoon after, his health declined, and—the recollection of it is agony to my mind—he died—but died acknowledging me for his daughter; and with an intention, I have ever thought, of revealing to me who was my other parent. He did not ſay ſhe was dead; he gave me that picture which Miſs Blyford was going to copy, and ſaid to me, (for I never ſhall forget his words) *If any doubt ever ariſes reſpecting your birth, look*

look at that picture—he could articulate no more. I *have* looked thouſands of times at the picture, but it cannot ſatisfy my doubts; and I can conclude only that I am very much like my mother, and that he thought the ſight of that picture would aſcertain my being her daughter."

"Thee is not like the picture," ſaid Mrs. Blyford, taking it up and intently comparing it.

"But why did thee leave Ireland?" ſaid Martha, a little curious.

"It was neceſſary I ſhould ſeek my living; for Mr. Byram leaving no will, I had nothing."

"What! did he leave thee nothing?—nothing to his daughter?" repeated Martha indignantly.

"I ſcarcely know who I am," anſwered Peregrina with a ſigh; "for ſtrange

as

as it may ſeem, after all Mr. Byram's parental affection towards me, I am confidently aſſured that to one of his ſervants he diſowned me for his child; and that thought breaks my heart."

"Thee muſt not believe it," ſaid Mrs. Blyford; "it is not probable."

"I am aſſured of it by one who had my intereſt very much at heart. I had better, therefore, never ſeek my mother, nor try to learn who ſhe was."

"Can thee recollect," aſked Mrs. Blyford, "in what words he diſclaimed thee?"

"A faithful ſervant was pleading for me, as his natural daughter, I believe."

"And I ſuppoſe then, he ſaid, thee was not his natural daughter."

"I be-

"I believe it was exactly ſo."

"Then be comforted, Peregrina; he meant it very differently from what thee underſtands. The Spirit moves me to think he meant that thee was his legitimate child; and thinking ſo, I give thee my word that I will not reſt, nor will John Blyford reſt, till thee has found out thy mother, or who ſhe was."

"O Madam! could I think ſo, I ſhould be too happy; I never dared truſt myſelf with the thought."

"It becomes thee, and becomes us all indeed, Peregrina, to be cautious how we admit hope that may end in diſappointment; thee is a very good young woman, and I need not tell thee how neceſſary it is while we hope the beſt, always to be prepared againſt the worſt. Truſt me thee ſhall find a father and a mother in John and Mary Blyford, if they cannot find for thee

a better

a better parent. Thee is a good young woman, and I love thee as my own."

Peregrina could only weep her gratitude for the protection offered her; and comforted by the affectionate expreſſions of Martha, who would not quit her, they waited, in expectation almoſt equal, the arrival of Mr. Blyford, who being informed by his wife of what had happened, called up reſtive Sarah, and in the mildeſt terms inculcated on her the duty ſhe owed to ſociety in revealing what ſhe knew of the perſon ſhe had mentioned, and pointed out to her the important privilege allowed her of doing good.

Whether male eloquence ſtill poſſeſſed over the heart of Sarah its ſuperior influence, or whether Mr. Blyford addreſſed himſelf leſs *miſconceivably* to her reaſon, or her purſe, is of no importance to gueſs; but Sarah ſet off all her power of revelation; and having gone through the truth faith-

faithfully, excepting a little vilifying natural to her, ſhe had volunteered an appendix, which told how Joan, the clumſieſt creature in the world, after having *loped* the Lord knew with who, and ſpent all her thouſand pounds in fine caps, and plays, and ſilks, and ſattins, came to great want, and died a beggar, as all ſuch proud miſſes did who loped with men, and did not behave themſelves like gentlewomen born and bred.

Mr. Blyford diſmiſſed Sarah, and came inſtantly to make his report to the ladies.

He prefaced what he had to ſay by expreſſions of the ſincereſt concern for his young friend, and by every offer that parental regard could prompt. It hurt him to be the meſſenger of a ſad detail; he wiſhed Sarah had never been admitted into his family; he could learn from her nothing more than that Joanna Doveridge, the only ſurvivor of Lord Doveridge's family,

mily, had been a ward of her father's, —that ſhe had clandeſtinely left his houſe, while under age; and that having lived a life of imprudence, ſhe had died in obſcurity.

Here ended Peregrina's hopes; and little was the conſolation ſhe found in that certainty which ſhe had till now thought muſt be far preferable to the miſery of doubt and ignorance. The family concurred in reprobating the conduct of Sarah, who, but at Peregrina's requeſt, would have been immediately removed from the houſe. She, curious to hear, if it were but a repetition of galling truths, all ſhe knew of her mother, begged ſhe might, at leaſt for a ſhort time, be tolerated.

Mrs. Blyford, who had more at leiſure than any one elſe, remarked the ill temper with which her ſervant delivered her teſtimony, was inclined to ſuſpect its veracity; and ſtill ruminating on Mr. Byram's

ſeeming renunciation of Peregrina, ſhe earneſtly wiſhed to inveſtigate the whole affair; and for the ſake, at leaſt, of *Joan*'s memory, to diſcover whether ſhe had not been the *wife* of Mr. Byram.

A conſultation was held on the means moſt likely to effect this valuable purpoſe, in which the family ſhewed a diſpoſition to undertake any trouble that promiſed ſucceſs, and it was at laſt agreed, that a viſit to the pariſh of Milham, in Berkſhire, where Mr. Rufford had lived and died, and where Joanna Doveridge muſt be ſtill remembered, would be the moſt efficacious plan. It was on Monday that it was propoſed, and the following Monday, as the firſt day Mr. Blyford, who was then going into the weſt to viſit a dying relative, could make convenient, was named for the expedition.

CHAP. IX.

WHILE the oppreſſed Elizabeth, as Peregrina Lamorne, was experiencing the reward of her undeviating integrity, in the voluntary attachment of friends her merit had made for her, Miſs Byram was recovering from her fever, and by returning to all her former habits, convinced thoſe ſhe ſeemed to live only to torment, that her ſuperſtitious fear of dying had produced no good effect on her mind. The attention ſhe had received from Lady Armathwaite excited no gratitude in her; nor did ſhe, when ſhe ſaw her laid up by the fatigue ſhe had undergone, in any one inſtance offer to repay her kindneſs. She only improved the opportunity to take advantage of the relaxation it had produced

in thoſe, whoſe buſineſs it was to watch her. She ate moſt miſcellaneouſly, and occaſionally ſolaced herſelf with a viſit to the butler's pantry, the ſervants' hall, or the ſtable.

In the mean time a very different ſcene was acting at Coventry. Juſt at the time when Lady Jemima began to deſpair of any return from Peregrina, the love-ſick Miſs Arabella Byram arrived, but not indeed clothed in *the yellow and purple robe of Hymen*, nor lighted by his *ſaffron torch*. She came in the Holyhead coach; and, when introduced to her mother, had to preſent her, not with her Adonis of a ſon-in-law, but with a detail of his barbarity, in having, in the moſt cruel, perfidious manner, dropped her on the road. Pretending that the confined air of a cloſe carriage did not agree with him, he had mounted himſelf on the box; and, when the coach ſtopped laſt, was reported to have betaken himſelf, with ſome expreſ-

ſions

ſions not quite becoming his elegance, or the chaſte reputation of his travelling companion, to another conveyance.

Lady Jemima, more inclined to reflect on her daughter's exceſſive folly, than to condole with her; and more deſirous to probe, than to heal her wounded heart, with aſtounding ſharpneſs *hoped ſhe was married!*

"Yes, my dear mother," anſwered Miſs, in a tragedy attitude, "*in the ſight of Heaven* we are one; for what could be more holy than ſuch vows? and at the reſurrection of the juſt, when love ſhall claim its love, and hearts ſeraphic ſink in mutual bliſs, I'll call him huſband, lover, father, friend!"

"Nonſenſe, girl; are you crazy? tell me, are you really his wife? his lawful wife?"

Miſs replied,

" By honour bound, by mutual love entwin'd;
" But holy church hath not pronounc'd its bleſſing."

" In the name of God," cried her Ladyſhip, in a rage, " do not talk ſuch infernal nonſenſe; why, your character is gone! what do you come here for?"

Miſs ſpouted,

" In ſight of angels ſtill we are virtuous;
" For thought of ill hath never ſoil'd our hearts;
" But the tyrannic world's dark prejudice
" Who can withſtand? Receive me yet, dear mother;
" And own me ſtill for a forlorn Caliſta."

" *Caliſta*, indeed!" retorted mama; " you are a pretty Caliſta! And what do you think I am to do with your Caliſta-ſhip? If you think I *will*, or *can* maintain you, you are monſtrouſly miſtaken; ſo you may troop to your heavenly huſband; for, by the living God, I will have nothing to ſay to you."

" You

"You won't, won't you?" taunted Caliſta; "well, its juſt as you pleaſe; I did gueſs as much; but I have more ſtrings than one to my bow, Madam—I know I am not far from my grandfather's; and I am ſure if he once hears one half of what I can tell, he will, if it is only to plague you, be kind to me."

Lady Jemima pauſed—ſhe knew Miſs Arabella well enough to be convinced, that with much leſs provocation than her preſent diſtreſs, ſhe dared do whatever ſhe threatened; and, foreſeeing that a viſit from her to Sir Clifford might, more completely than any thing elſe, ruin her own projects, ſhe lowered her tone, came to a parley, agreed on a truce, and at length made peace and an alliance.

Even in Arabella's rage and nonſenſe, ſhe ſaw talents that might more effectually aid an impoſition on Sir Clifford, than the nearer age, or more ripened underſtanding,

of the elder ſiſter; and Laſſiter, who made her that day a viſit, and who dreaded nothing ſo much as the introduction of Elizabeth herſelf, gave his opinion in favour of overlooking Miſs's miſdemeanors, and enliſting her into the ſervice.

Covetouſneſs and docility being the only qualities requiſite in the buſineſs; and the former producing the latter in the mind of Arabella, her immediate introduction, in due form, to her grand-father, who was a little recovered from his illneſs, was decided on, and Mr. Laſſiter, being then, in conſequence of the abſence of Mr. Broome, in the plenitude of power, he had addreſs enough to perſuade Sir Clifford of the generoſity of forgiveneſs, and to diſpoſe him to ſee Lady Jemima, when ſhe came to introduce Mr. Byram's daughter.

Arabella had been ſo well tutored, that ſhe not only had her part at her fingers' ends, but ſhe entered into the very ſpirit of

of it. She therefore was far leſs daunted than her mother, when they were uſhered into Sir Clifford's apartment; and when the old man, agitated almoſt to childiſhneſs, could only reach out a hand to each, and iterate to his daughter-in-law, "I forgive you;" and to his grand-child, "I am glad at my heart to ſee you."

Miſs anſwered all queſtions incomparably well; and, being a ſhewy girl, brought very forward by the leſſons ſhe had learnt at ſchool, ſhe neither betrayed her age, nor diſappointed Sir Clifford's hopes; and Lady Jemima was ſo humble, ſo penitent; ſhe ſhed ſo many tears, and was ſo affected whenever Mr. Byram's name was mentioned, that Sir Clifford, delighted with his viſitors, proteſted that his grand-daughter ſhould have no home but Byram Park, and expreſſed a wiſh that Lady Jemima would take the charge of her and of his family.

He inquired after his other grand-daughters, and hearing that one was very comfortably ſituated with Lord and Lady Armathwaite, he expreſſed ſome ſurprize at having never heard of the Earl's ſecond marriage; aſked who his preſent lady was; and, in his eagerneſs to talk to his new favourite, forgot he was not anſwered.

Theſe matters ſucceeded to the wiſh of as fine a ſwindling gang as ever practiſed deception. Mrs. Browne, to whom Lady Jemima was remarkably civil, concurred in all their ſchemes; they had ſome footing at Byram Park, and it was not likely Sir Clifford would long puzzle their ingenious wits.

Miſs Byram, the perſon of the moſt importance in the family, was noticed by all her grand-father's friends, and began to be looked up to as a great heireſs; and for ſome weeks Sir Clifford forgot, in the joy of exhibiting her, how faſt he was verging

to

to the grave. He indulged her in all her expenſive whims; and miſtaking her confidence for ſuperiority of genius, he frequently rendered himſelf in a ſmall degree, ridiculous, by clapping when ſhe ſqualled out of tune, or exhibited a blue and green daubing, to entertain the company aſſembled to feed his pardonable vanity.

But a ſmall buſtle ſoon diſturbed theſe *country mice* in their viſit to their great friend. Mr. Broome, no one knew why, but all rejoiced at it, was from home; but unfortunately poor Dennis Geohegan had found his way back again; and ſo terrible a perſonage as a ſimple Iriſh clown, was potent enough to alarm the party.

It was fortunate for theſe projectors, that Dennis thought it, in his wiſdom, moſt prudent to pay his firſt viſit to Mr. Laſſiter, to complain to him of the ill-treatment he had met with, and to beſpeak his influence towards propitiating his two maſters. The

honeſt Hibernian had not the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion that his compulſatory voyage was the handy-work of Lady Jemima, or the contrivance of Mr. Laſſiter; he therefore took the condolence he met with in very good part, and ſeemed very well ſatisfied that he eſcaped without blame; perhaps, remembering, that at the time of his being conveyed on board the ſhip, he was not perfectly maſter of his faculties. Laſſiter, with great ſhew of reaſon, repreſented to him the additional difficulty his failure in his errand, and his long abſence had thrown in the way of his re-admiſſion into Sir Clifford's family; and teaching him to expect no mercy from Mr. Broome, he reduced the poor fellow to ſuch a ſtate of deſpondency and ductility, that had he adviſed recourſe to the next horſe-pond, Teague was quite in a mood to think well of his judgment. It was therefore no difficult matter to make him accept a letter of recommendation to a friend of Mr. Laſſiter's in London, who, he was aſſured, would

procure

procure him a place, and in the mean time, if he took care not to mar his own intereſt by premature appearance again in the neighbourhood, Mr. Laſſiter undertook to overcome all his difficulties, and to re-inſtate him with eclat in the family he was moſt anxious to ſerve.

This impediment removed, the trio ſeemed more firmly fixed than ever. Lady Jemima's private marriage was known only to Mrs. Browne; and her Ladyſhip conducted herſelf in a way that recommended her more and more to Sir Clifford, while Miſs Arabella won his heart by her vivacities, and the credit ſhe did to his liberality. The old man, as if convinced that his prejudices were culpable, began to talk of tranſplanting Lady Jemima's two daughters into his family; and thoſe whom it concerned began ſtill more cordially than ever, to wiſh his reſtleſs benevolence quiet in the grave.

The

The month of November paſſed in halcyon felicity; and Mr. Broome, having ſtaid away from his pariſh without aſſigning any reaſon, till ſome of his flock were diſpoſed to join Mr. Laſſiter's outcry againſt his negligence, and Sir Clifford himſelf began to ſuſpect he ſhould, during the winter, be entertained only by the curate, the horizon of fraud had not a cloud to threaten it with; and perhaps the ladies would ſoon, by relaxing, the one her reſtraints, the other her aſſiduities, have marred all their good fortune, had not Miſs Byram received an unexpected viſit from her quondam lover and fellow-traveller, Mr. Charles Grubb, who hearing accidentally, that the young lady had got, as he termed it, *into good loaf*, had withdrawn his five-ſhilling advertiſement of, "*Wants a place, as valet, a young man who dreſſes hair, ſhaves, writes a good hand*, &c. and beſtowed the ſmall remnant of his purſe in procuring an *al freſco* conveyance by a ſtage coach, from which he alighted at the gate of Byram Park,

Park, and thence boldly made his way to *the north ſtar of his immoveable adorations*, as, in one of his letters he had chriſtened Miſs Arabella.

She was called from Sir Clifford, to attend the gentleman in the hall. Gladly would ſhe have refuſed him the requeſted audience, but the experiment was dangerous; and as his meſſage was reſpectful, it betrayed nothing; and ſhe doubted not that a few of the many guineas Sir Clifford's bounty enabled her to throw away, would quiet the fellow, and get rid of him.

But *the fellow* was neither to be ſo quieted; nor by any means in her power, could ſhe get rid of him. He talked highly of her promiſes, which his ſiſter, and her own many letters could prove—he reminded her, how entirely her reputation depended on his ſilence; and in this conference Miſs Arabella ſo far improved her know-

knowledge of the world, as to find out, that it is not always in the power of thoſe who have foſtered impudence, to repreſs it when it becomes troubleſome.

All depending on her appeaſing him, ſhe endeavored to temporize, but he would not wait an hour for her reſolution: he proteſted that unleſs ſhe ſuffered him to ſhare her good fortune, he would inſtantly divulge her conduct, and ruin her with thoſe ſhe depended on; and had not Arabella's fertile imagination ſuggeſted to her immediately an expedient, her remaining at Byram Park, even the enſuing night, would have been doubtful.

Having a little ſoothed him by a few fair ſpeeches, and gained his acquieſcence to her plan, by aſſuring him that a very ſhort time, and Sir Clifford's certain death, muſt put it in her power to place her *dear Charles* in the zenith of beatitude, ſhe went to her grandfather with a coun-

countenance of doubt, reſpect, and humility, and ſpeaking haſtily, as in great agitation, ſaid, "My dear Sir, I am quite frightened at what I have done. I have taken ſuch a liberty, as even you, good as you are to me, cannot, I fear, pardon."

"If my pardon, my dear child, can make you eaſy, you have it. What has happened?"

"Why, dear Sir, here is a young man who was brought up out of charity by the governeſs I was with in Dublin; ſhe, poor woman! is diſappointed in her hope of getting a genteel proviſion for him, and he is come over to get a ſervice: he has no friends in England, and he is come all this way out of his road to aſk me to intereſt myſelf to get him a place. I have told him how good you are, and I inconſiderately ſaid, without firſt conſulting you, that you would, I was certain, give him a night's lodging here."

"Truſt

" Truſt me, my dear child, I ſhall never be offended with you or any body for ſupplying my place by doing an act of benevolence. Let the young man ſtay by all means. Is he a perſon of good character ?"

" Very good, indeed, Sir ; he has maintained his mother and five ſiſters for ſeveral years."

" How could he do that, my dear, if he has been out of all employment ?"

" Oh, he has been at ſea, and ſent his wages ; and he always goes to church conſtantly, and reads the Bible for his amuſement, and is ſo good !—you have no idea, Sir, how good he is."

" Well, my dear, if you give ſo good an account of him, I am well inclined to think him deſerving. I have had no ſervant

vant in Dennis's place, ſuppoſing I were to take him?"

"O that would be charming!"

"Can he read and write?"

"O yes, vaſtly well; he can do any any thing. Shall I go and tell him you will keep him?"

"Let him come to me, my dear child; I will ſpeak to him myſelf."

Miſs flew to give Mr. Charles Grubb his cue: he pretended to think it extremely inconſiſtent with his genteel ſituation in life to *perſonate* a ſervant; but his paſſion at laſt conquering his ſcruples, he followed her, went through his interrogatories perfectly to the ſatisfaction of his new maſter; and immediately, before the leaſt hint of the buſineſs had even reached the ſervants'-hall, he was enrolled of their number.

number. He had addreſs enough to pleaſe Sir Clifford. Lady Jemima, though too ſagacious to be deluded by her daughter's legend of Mr. Grubb, thought it prudent to be ſilent; and the young lady herſelf, who was vaſtly fond of riding on horſe-back with only a ſervant, and preferred the new footman to the old coachman, had ſufficient opportunity of unwitneſſed converſation with him, to tutor him and keep him in patience and good humor.

CHAP. X.

LADY JEMIMA in ſilence watched all this, and talked confidently to Mrs. Browne, now become nearly her equal, on the demolition all their hopes muſt experience, ſhould Arabella be Sir Clifford's heir, and marry this indigent fellow, from whoſe juſtice or generoſity no advantage to themſelves could be expected. Suggeſtions ſuch as theſe were not loſt on Mrs. Browne, who had as keen an eye as any one of the party to her own intereſt; and who moreover had diſcovered that Mr. Charles Grubb was very handſome, and likewiſe very *genteel-behaved* whenever he *included* himſelf into the houſekeeper's *department*. She was therefore commiſſioned by her half ſiſter-in-law, and half-

miſtreſs,

miſtreſs, to hint to Mr. Charles Grubb, that Miſs Byram, notwithſtanding appearances, would never have a ſhilling of Sir Clifford's property; and on her own account ſhe added to this comfortable piece of intelligence the ſight of legal ſecurities, which ſhe herſelf poſſeſſed, to the value of five hundred pounds; ſhe ſaid, that whoever ſhe married, ſhould not be made to dance attendance on her or her grand-father; and, in ſhort, ſhe ſo diſtracted the poor young man between future contingencies and preſent advantages, that Miſs Byram detected him wavering. She ſaw her danger, and prudently averted it, by a ſhew of bank notes and jewels, preſents to her from Sir Clifford; ſhe then commiſſioned him to get the banns publiſhed in a diſtant pariſh, in his own name, and that of Arabella Byram, which ſhe truſted would deceive thoſe with whom it was her intent to paſs for Elizabeth.

The concluſion of the match, which, however ſuſpected by Lady Jemima, ſhe did not chuſe to cavil at, leſt her own intereſt ſhould fall to the ground, made little difference in the ſituation of affairs at Byram Park; and *Mrs. Grubb* ſtill triumphed as Miſs Byram, every day increaſing her impatience to ſee herſelf releaſed by Sir Clifford's death, from the maſquerade in which ſhe bore ſo ſplendid a character.

At length Mr. Broome returned, but not to the ſituation of reſpect and eſteem he had poſſeſſed in the mind of Sir Clifford, who chid him ſeverely for his abſence, and ſeemed ſtill more diſſatisfied when he declared the buſineſs that had called him away, was not ſuch as he could reveal. It would, indeed, have been folly to reveal it, for he had been on a fruitleſs ſearch after ſome traces of Joanna Doveridge; and having confined his inquiries, for want of better information, to ſuch

of

of Byram's friends as had been the companions of their youthful days; he had ſhunned carefully all Lady Jemima's connections as hoſtile to his wiſhes, and had traverſed great part of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to no purpoſe.

He ſoon heard of the additions Sir Clifford had made to his family; and looking with a jealous eye upon two women who appeared to him the puppets of ſome ſcheme, he gave little credit to Lady Jemima's obſequiouſneſs, or Miſs Byram's confident vivacity: he could not, indeed, diſpute their pretenſions: he was told, and he had no authority for doubting it, that the young lady was Mr. Byram's daughter by his firſt marriage, of which marriage he had himſelf procured legal evidence by an authenticated copy of the regiſter from his former pariſh; and by this act of juſtice he had only ſo much the more effectually rivetted in Sir Clifford's doting affection, the perſon his own ideas

rejected

rejected from every claim to it. He had not the ſmalleſt difficulty in believing that the young lady was a Byram: ſhe, as well as her ſiſter, inherited Lambert's features, but there was now and then an aſtute glance, ſo much like the cunning expreſſion of Lady Jemima's countenance, and ſhe was ſo widely different from every thing he remembered of lovely Miſs Doveridge, that under any other circumſtances, his ſtrong perſuaſion would have prompted him unheſitatingly to declare her not only not the daughter of Joanna, but the trueſt offspring of Lady Jemima.

It was, however, impoſſible to do any thing againſt ſuch complete prepoſſeſſions; for Sir Clifford now appeared attached to Miſs Byram as much by perſonal choice, as by regard to his ſon's memory, and had not unfrequently declared, that were his dear Elizabeth an alien to his family, he ſtill, from a knowledge of her multifold excellencies, ſhould make her his heir.

He wiſhed for nothing on this ſide the grave, but that he might be permitted to ſee her well married; but this, alas! he could not hope for in his declining ſtate.

Mr. Broome had not been at home many days, before he had an opportunity of obſerving the affability with which Miſs Byram behaved to her groom in one of her equeſtrian airings. Depreſſed as he was by Sir Clifford's miſguided partiality, he conſidered that however injurious to a family ſuch an indiſcretion might prove, he had little chance of being believed, ſhould he, as a friend, adviſe the diſmiſſion of Mr. Charles Grubb, who was known to be univerſally a favourite, and whoſe franked covers gave his fellow ſervants an idea, and were to his lady a confirmation, of his importance.

While poor Broome's indignation and anxiety worried him almoſt to death, he was requeſted by the clergyman of the

pariſh

pariſh where Mr. Charles and Miſs Arabella had been privately, in one of their long airings, united, to relieve him, by doing duty for him the next Sunday, from the diſtreſs occaſioned by his own illneſs, and the ſudden diſmiſſion of his curate, who had given great offence the day before to one of the firſt men in the country, by publiſhing, without his concurrence, the banns for his daughter and a young officer of dragoons, whom he had once kicked out of his houſe.

Broome, ever ready to do a good-natured action, complied; and having to marry a ruſtic couple before he read the ſervice, he opened the regiſter and ſaw the names of Charles Grubb and Arabella Byram. What was before only ſuſpicion, ſupported by internal ſentiment, was now confirmation ſtrong; and when, with the devotion of an honeſt heart, he entered the deſk, and beſought the Divine bleſſing on his office, he could not forbear a momentary

mentary ejaculation, in which he appealed to the juſtice of Heaven againſt the powers of darkneſs.

He performed his duty to the edification of his hearers, and then mounting his horſe, in deep thought returned home, lamenting moſt ſeriouſly that it was not only the *fate* of the unſuſpecting to be duped, but too frequently their *choice*, and well convinced that were he to ſtir an inquiry concerning Miſs Byram's title to that appellative, he was more likely to raiſe up Mr. Charles Grubb into a powerful enemy, than to open Sir Clifford's eyes to the villainy that hedged him in.

The old gentleman's wiſhed-for death having been thus long moſt cruelly poſtponed, the individuals who compoſed the faction had time for obſervation; and it was with no benignity that Lady Jemima contemplated the very glaring *penchant* that her daughter diſcovered, to all but Sir Clifford,

Clifford, for Mr. Charles Grubb. She mentioned her uneaſineſs to Laſſiter and to Mrs. Browne. The lawyer had already ſeen it, and ſeemed prepared againſt it in his own mind; but the gentlewoman was ſure there was nothing more than a little *ormleſs* giddineſs in it. Charles was very prudent, and Miſs, ſuch a great *fortin* as ſhe would be, would never ſure *demean* herſelf to *trigue* with a footman: then Charles was ſo obliging and ſo good natured, that ſhe was ſure, if he was to go, ſome other folks would not be long after him, for the beſt place in the world. Lady Jemima, never dull in underſtanding a hint, perceived that the matter muſt be preſſed no farther in this quarter, and began to feel that ſhe was in ſome meaſure the ſlave of her own ſervant.

Amongſt the families who viſited at Byram Park, was that of the Duke, whoſe ſon, the ſlender Marquis, had failed in his elopement with Lady Almerina Delaford.

The affair had ſo diſguſted the friends of the young lady to whom he was contracted, that the match had broken off with much animoſity; and the Duke being extremely earneſt to retrieve the honour of his houſe, and to obliterate the remembrance of his ſon's folly, by marrying him reſpectably, caſt his eyes towards Miſs Byram; and finding the Marquis not at all averſe to the connection, but on the contrary, impreſſed rather in favour of the lady, he reſolved immediately to make a viſit in form to Sir Clifford, and propoſe the alliance, which he could not doubt, unleſs the fair one's hand was engaged, would be accepted. Accordingly his Grace ſet out, and finding Sir Clifford much recovered, and in his library, after a few inquiries and condolences, he opened the buſineſs, and received the baronet's moſt grateful thanks for the honour intended him and his grand-daughter, of which he would duly inform her, and would wait on his Grace the next day, if his

his health permitted, with the anſwer ſhe ſhould furniſh him with, which, conſidering not only the ſuperiority of rank, but the perſonal recommendations of the young Lord, he had no doubt would be, as his own was, a grateful acquieſcence.

Miſs Byram, whoſe delicacy would have been too much ſhocked, had it been mentioned to her before the Duke, was called, immediately as he departed, to hear on how important an errand he had come to Byram Park. Sir Clifford, whoſe joy was too tumultuous to allow of free articulation or choice of phraſe, could tell her only that now he deſired nothing more than to depart in peace, for that he ſhould ſee her ſettled to his own ſatisfaction. He then named the Marquis as a candidate for her favour; and the young lady evinced, by the rapid changes in her color and countenance, how ſenſible ſhe was of *the importance of the errand*, if not of her felicity.

" So,

"So, juſt ſo," cried Sir Clifford in ecſtacy, "looked your grand-mother when I, then a ſmart young fellow with a bag wig, Bruſſels' ruffles, and a ſword by my ſide, told her ſhe muſt no longer be coy and coquetiſh, but take me or refuſe me. Ah, poor thing! ſhe lived but a twelvemonth after our marriage."

Miſs was not much diſpoſed to draw foreboding inferences from this ill-timed obſervation. She ſcarcely heard it; for ſhe, dear girl! was wholly taken up with conſidering how ſhe might contrive to have two huſbands. Mr. Charles Grubb, ſhe could not, ſhe feared, get rid of—the Marquis ſhe could not think of foregoing. Her embarraſſment, as well as her circumſtances, rendering it impoſſible for her to give her grand-father an anſwer, ſhe begged a few hours for conſideration, and left the old gentleman delighted with her affected modeſty and docility.

She ſought inſtantly Mr. Charles Grubb, who fortunately was parading the ſweep before the houſe, with the horſes ready for her airing. She mounted, galloped to the neareſt grove, and there beckoning her ſatellite, and being aſſured that Mr. Broome, who had juſt paſſed them, was out of ſight and hearing, ſhe told him how grievouſly ſhe was diſtreſſed; and finding no reſource in his wits, ſhe, under pretence of her terror of diſobliging *old Cliff*, propoſed to Charles the relinquiſhment of her, for the ſum of a thouſand pounds, which ſhe promiſed ſhould be his on her marriage.

But Charles, though he cared little now for the lady, and had not always been inſenſible to the creams and ſyllabubs, the haſhes and ragouts, the cinnamon water and the ratafia, which Mrs. Browne pilfered for him, was ſtill too much delighted with the idea of having married his miſtreſs, and with the proſpect of having a

legal claim on her great expectations, to relinquiſh her; and ſhe could prevail on him no farther than to ſuffer her to do any thing not inimical to his intereſts, which might ſecure her own with *old Cliff*. She told him it was not improbable, that unleſs the tireſome old fellow died firſt, as ſhe prayed Heaven he might, ſhe might be driven to conſent to the marriage, though in her heart ſhe abhorred it; but that ſhould this be the caſe, and ſhould ſhe even be compelled to cheat the wretch by marrying the Marquis, it would be of no conſequence, as it muſt be the firſt marriage that ſhould ſtand good; and ſhe gave him her word and honour that, inſtantly as ſhe had ſecured for her dear Charles the property ſhe was heireſs to, ſhe would avow her ſituation, and return with rapture to his arms. In this, Charles, without much ſcruple, concurred; and Arabella felt at liberty to be a marchioneſs when ſhe pleaſed, and to uſe him as it ſuited her.

CHAP. XI.

SIR CLIFFORD was furniſhed with the young lady's conſent; the matter was inſtantly blazed abroad: Lady Jemima and Laſſiter ſaw great things; the one conſidered her daughter's being a ducheſs as a ſure bulwark for herſelf againſt all future misfortune; the other dreamt of a great ſtewardſhip and a purchaſed title: the wedding was talked of; the London newſpapers got the intelligence; and on the morning after Mr. Blyford had ſet out for the weſt, Peregrina ſaw the article which ſtated that the Marquis's intended bride was *Miſs Elizabeth Byram, the only daughter of Lambert Byram, Eſq. of the kingdom of Ireland, by his firſt marriage with the Hon. Miſs Doveridge, daughter and*

ſole heireſs of the laſt baron of that family; and farther added, that the ceremony was to be performed at the ſeat of Sir Clifford Byram, in Northamptonſhire.

At the time when ſhe caſt her eye on the article, ſhe was going to put into execution a deſign ſhe had ruminated on all night, that of imparting to Ami Bonange the whole of her hiſtory and diſtreſſes, and intereſting him in the diſcovery of her mother. She was now farther encouraged to do ſo, by the intelligence ſhe had ſo fortuitouſly lighted on, which perſuaded her, as ſtrongly as Mrs. Blyford was before perſuaded, that her mother was *privately* but *lawfully* the *wife* of Mr. Byram.

She had inſtantly communicated to her friends the news ſhe had met with; and Mrs. Blyford had ſtrenuouſly recommended an immediate inquiry as the only means of preventing ſome unaccountable impoſition She repreſented to Peregrina, that

were

were ſhe, as Elizabeth Byram, the legitimate daughter of Mr. Byram, a large part of his property muſt belong to her, if he died inteſtate: this advantage, Sir Clifford being living, was not ſo certain; and Peregrina ſet againſt it the hatred ſhe was taught to ſuppoſe her grand-father entertained towards her; but to this Mrs. Blyford was not inclined to pay much credit; ſhe was convinced Sir Clifford was duped, and had very bad people about him; and ſhe thought very little of what had been aſſented was to be relied on.

Peregrina wrote, as ſhe had deſigned, to Ami Bonange a detail of all that had happened, and of her own ſtory; and conjured him, by every ſentiment of filial piety and common charity, to make all poſſible inquiry into the fate of Joanna Doveridge, who was undoubtedly her father's wife and her mother; and whom ſhe could not believe to have lived or died, as Sarah Earle had, ſhe was perſuaded, ma-

liciouſly

liciouſly repreſented. She farther begged him to learn who it was that the Marquis, whom ſhe deſcribed by his title, was about to marry.

The next and far more arduous buſineſs was to write to Sir Clifford Byram himſelf; a meaſure which Mrs. Blyford urged with all the force of reaſon; it was the hardeſt taſk ſhe had ever yet undertaken; for like all perſons in ſuch a ſituation, ſhe forgot that her inability itſelf would plead more powerfully for her than any eloquence.

At laſt, thinking it of importance to ſave the poſt, and finding her courage did not increaſe by conſideration, ſhe haſtily wrote:

"HONORED SIR,

"I AM told you hold me in utter abhorrence; I have been ſtrictly enjoined never to uſurp your name, or to boaſt myſelf

myſelf of your family; yet I ſee myſelf deſcribed in the public papers as enjoying your favour; and I am perſuaded ſome one is moſt groſsly impoſing on your goodneſs; who it is I do not even wiſh to gueſs; I aſk for no advantage to myſelf; but ſurely I am not obliged to reſt ſilent, when I have every reaſon to believe you are not as adverſe to me as you are deſcribed.

"If, Sir, it is to *Elizabeth, the only daughter of Mr. Byram, by his marriage with Joanna Doveridge*, that you mean to be kind, I am ſhe; though the commands I received from you have compelled me to aſſume another name, and to conceal my origin. Do not, therefore, I beſeech you, countenance fraud; at leaſt, let me entreat you to know on whom you beſtow your parental regard. I envy no one the enjoyment of your favour, if it be their right; but I ſhould be acceſſary to the deception, were I to acquieſce in it.

"Should

"Should you, Sir, be ſo far favourably diſpoſed towards me as to wiſh for farther information, the direction I ſubjoin will find me as

Your very dutiful grand-child,

PEREGRINA LAMORNE."

Mrs. Blyford, to whom Peregrina ſhewed her letter for her approbation, was convinced that it would be followed by an immediate ſummons for her to Byram Park, if not by a viſit in perſon from her grand-father, and kindly offered, in either caſe, to accompany and ſupport her. But Peregrina had far leſs ſanguine hopes; ſhe had ſeen wickedneſs in glory, till ſhe began to think it the uſual courſe of things.

Her mind was now tortured beyond what ſhe had hitherto experienced; in vain ſhe appealed to the miniature of her mother, and wept over it; in ſpite of the words that accompanied her receiving it, ſhe could get no ſatisfaction from it, and

ſhe

ſhe was in an agony of doubt, as painful to diſcourſe on as to conceal. Her ruminations ſuggeſted to her no hope that could counterbalance the preſentiment, that from her utmoſt diligence ſhe ſhould derive no other ſatisfaction than, perhaps, the knowledge of the ſpot where her mother was buried; and ſhe could not but apprehend, that by her application to Sir Clifford, which ſhe ſaw no means of ſupporting to the proof of her identity, ſhe ſhould only rank herſelf in the number of detected impoſtors. Even ſhould he be inclined to ſuſpend his opinion, how could ſhe prove herſelf the true Elizabeth? the picture ſhe poſſeſſed might have been procured by any other method than that of Mr. Byram's gift; her governeſs, who could have detailed her father's conduct towards her, was no more; Lady Jemima ſeemed by all the world to be held in diſrepute, even ſhould ſhe, as was not probable, againſt the intereſt of her daughter, be diſpoſed to identify their rival: little

more

more probability was there that either of the young ladies would ſerve, to their prejudice, one whom they had ſo uniformly contemned: Dennis Geoghegan, could he be found, was far more likely to avouch his maſter's dereliction of her than her claim on the family: no one of the ſervants of Mr. Byram was at all within her reach; it did not appear to her that Lady Jemima had even confidentially diſcloſed to Mrs. Haccombe the relation ſhe ſtood in to her deceaſed huſband; ſhe herſelf had ſtrengthened an opinion againſt any ſuch claim by the adoption of another deſignation, and by her punctilious regard to the commands ſhe had received; commands of which ſhe now began to ſee the artifice and the cruelty; for in the tempeſtuous reſtleſſneſs of her thoughts ſhe had, with a conviction little leſs potent than that of truth, gueſſed that Lady Jemima had ſucceeded in making peace with Sir Clifford, and for ſome reaſon, unintelligible to her, who was too humble to ſuppoſe her own impor-

importance, had impoſed one of her own daughters on him as Mr. Byram's eldeſt offspring. On this ſuppoſition ſhe began to found a ſtill greater hope that her mother's character had been reſcued from ignominy; *how*, ſhe could not penetrate—*by whom*, it was as impoſſible to diſcover, ſo difficult was it to aſcertain even her friends and enemies.

Sometimes recollecting the letter ſhe had received from Lady Jemima, ſhe was inclined to think more favourably of her, and to ſuppoſe that ſhe had ſought her to re-inſtate her in Sir Clifford's good opinion; and here, whatever was her ladyſhip's motive, ſhe was not very wide of the truth; but againſt this ſhe oppoſed the omniſcience of Ami Bonange, and was then half inclined to think Lady Jemima had deſigned only to remove her ſtill farther out of the way, before ſhe brought forward her own daughter in her ſtead.

In

In anxiety that admitted of no reſt, or of her taking any ſuſtenance, ſhe remained undiſturbed by any event till the morning of Thurſday, when ſhe received from Lady Cottiſbrooke a very affectionate reply to her laſt communication, in which ſhe incloſed a letter from her ſon Hamilton, expreſſing the ſevereſt concern for the miſchief his volatility had occaſioned, and beſeeching her to uſe her intereſt in the family ſhe was then in, to procure him an introduction to their favour, and to overcome the formidable obſtacles that oppoſed his atoning, as he wiſhed, for his paſt miſconduct: he ſhewed that his heart, eaſily impreſſed, was eminently ſuſceptible of pity, and that he had a mind that could not reſt under the idea of having done an injury.

Peregrina's thoughts were called from her miſeries by the wiſh, natural to every ingenuous mind, of aiding a friend; but to indulge that wiſh required great circumſpection

cumſpection and delicacy, as it was more than poſſible that the very firſt ſtep taken to promote Martha Blyford's happineſs, would for ever preclude it.

She had deviſed no method, when Martha herſelf, with an unintelligible mixture of various paſſions in her countenance, came to her with an open letter in her hand, which, as if too much intereſted in its contents to repeat them, ſhe put into friend Lamorne's hand. She read with an increaſe of her vexations the firſt paragraph, which ſhewed that it was not as ſhe had at firſt imagined, from Hamilton Courtland, but from Mr. Blyford, who ſaid, that he was moſt unwillingly obliged to poſtpone the ſcheme planned for the enſuing week, as his uncle was then juſt dead, and the management of his affairs would not admit of his leaving the place he was in, in leſs than ten days. Mr. Blyford then in the moſt affectionate manner congratulated his daughter on the

bequeſt

bequeſt of thirty thouſand pounds, to which, by the will of her deceaſed relative, ſhe was inſtantly and uncontrolably entitled, and with expreſſions of the firmeſt reliance on her prudence, that ſhe would ſhew that, however young, ſhe might be ſafely truſted with one of the greateſt of all worldly temptations, *proſperity*, he hinted to her the numerous felicities her uncle's bounty would procure for her, in the ability it conferred to do good.

Mortifying as was the firſt intelligence of this letter to Peregrina, ſhe could turn with heart-felt joy to congratulate her amiable friend on its contents; but Martha, far from exhibiting the uſual ſymptoms of delight on ſuch an occaſion, was in tears, for which ſhe would give no reaſon; and to avoid queſtions, ſhe withdrew.

Pere-

Peregrina wiſhing much to ſound her diſpoſition towards Courtland, without betraying her information of his ſentiments, at their next meeting aſked her, with affected cheerfulneſs, what ſhe intended to do with her wealth. She anſwered very ſeriouſly, "firſt, to make *thee* happy, or, at leaſt, if that cannot be, to prevent thee from ever wanting."

Peregrina, repenting of a query to which ſhe had expected a very different anſwer, colored, and excuſing her momentary want of thought, ſhe aſſured Martha her curioſity aroſe ſolely from her wiſh to find that the bequeſt of her uncle would eſtabliſh her happineſs.

"That it can never do," ſhe replied, gravely, and with emotion. "I am a ſimple girl, friend Peregrina; and living as we do, I cannot tell always what I ought to do; ſo that I often think, and indeed am *ſure*, I muſt be very odd and very abſurd;

abſurd; for by the little I *do* ſee, I am convinced that if all people were like me, they could not do as they do; and to tell thee truth," added ſhe, ſmiling faintly, "I often think every body more in the right than I am, for they ſeem to know better than I do what things will make them happy; but when I aſk myſelf whether what makes them happy, would make me ſo, I feel it would not.—I have often thought; for I think very ſtrangely, that the world is very much like a great dinner, where I have ſeen ſome diſh that has looked very nice, and every body has admired it, and when I have taſted it, perhaps it was too ſweet, or too ſalt, or too acid for my palate—but what I blame myſelf for is, that I do not remember this; but when I have been ſhewn that people who have every thing I have wiſhed for, are ſtill not happy, I am again too apt to be cheated, and to believe it is the fault of their palate, and that it would ſuit mine."

Peregrina could not forbear ſmiling; and Martha, as if encouraged by her attention, went on:

"I have ſeen, for inſtance, that many people who are married to thoſe they love, are very far from happy: I have a couſin that is a terrible inſtance of this; but then I think he is not ſo good tempered—he is not, if you underſtand me, ſo much to be liked as Hamil—— as—— as, I was going to ſay, he *might be*—and his wife does not take the pains to pleaſe him that I would do."

Poor Martha had wandered ſo far from her firſt idea, that it was difficult to get home again. Peregrina filled up the pauſe by expreſſing her concern that any thing ſhould ſo early in Martha's life have ſo clouded its proſpect, as to induce gloomy ideas of its comforts. "You have half-named Captain Courtland," ſaid ſhe; "I wiſh it was poſſible to think well of him."

"Thee cannot, ſure, think *ill* of him!"

"His conduct to *you!*"

"Oh! it was my fault. Why did I, an ignorant girl—as ignorant as a nun—and a *Quaker* too—and no-body likes Quakers, fancy that he could be ſerious? How could I be ſo undutiful to my father and mother, as to like one not of our ſociety, and a ſoldier too? Oh! ſoldiers are very, very bad people; that is, I mean there ought to be no ſoldiers, for there ſhould be no fighting—we all ought to live in peace."

"Then, had Captain Courtland behaved otherwiſe, you would ſtill have rejected him for theſe reaſons!"

"I hope—yes, I think I would; at leaſt I would have tried. I'll tell thee, Peregrina, all my heart—I do love Hamilton Courtland

Courtland better than all the world beſide; but I am ſure I would not wiſh to love him if it was wrong. I would never diſpleaſe my father or mother; for then if I had the whole world, I ſhould be miſerable. And now that I am to have ſo much money of my own, I have been thinking it would be ſtill worſe if I was to do as I chooſe; for then it would ſeem as if I took advantage of my old uncle's kindneſs, to make my father and mother unhappy; ſo I am determined, and, indeed, that was what I was ſo fooliſh as to cry at—that I will never again think of Hamilton—I am ſure he never thinks of me."

Not having it in her power to anſwer for the event, Peregrina thought it imprudent to enter farther on this ſubject. She preferred writing to Lady Cottiſbrooke, to ſuggeſt the propriety of an application to Mr. Blyford, hopeleſs as, notwithſtanding the general liberality of his opini-

ons, it appeared; and this ſhe did by the return of the poſt, too averſe to a repetition of her own ſufferings to relate them even to her kind friend.

Again ſhe ſunk into an unquiet ſtate of dejection, anxious beyond meaſure when in expectation of letters on the Friday, and depreſſed to the loweſt extremity when diſappointed. Saturday increaſed her diſtreſs by the following billet, which precluded all hope in one quarter:

"MISS LAMORNE,

"BY the deſire of the widow of the late Mr. Byram, who acts at preſent for Sir Clifford, he being very ill, I have to inform you that her Ladyſhip knows no ſuch perſon as you deſcribe yourſelf to be, and you are hereby deſired no farther to moleſt the family, as it will be at your peril.

"Your's to command,

"W. LASSITER."

It

It was ſcarcely poſſible for Mrs. Blyford, or her compaſſionate daughter, to afford the ſmalleſt comfort to their beloved gueſt, under ſo cruel a cataſtrophe of their juſt expectations. Nothing was wanting on their part: Mrs. Blyford would inſtantly have taken a journey with her to Byram Park; but Peregrina's ſpirit could not brook the hazard of being turned from the gate as an impoſtor.

She had wept herſelf into a ſtate of exhauſted quiet, when ſhe was told that a man on horſeback inquired for her.

She went down into the hall: the man was a ſtranger, and had the appearance of a ſervant out of livery; he had diſmounted, gave her a letter, and ſaid he ſhould wait her anſwer.

Caſting her eyes over three ſides of the paper, ſhe ſaw the ſignature of Ami Bonange. Such a correſpondence was not

to be exhibited in public; with velocity greater than her ſtrength, ſhe ran up ſtairs, locked her door, and read, after a preface of the moſt conſolatory expreſſions, this anſwer to her commiſſion:

"With regard to the much-talked-of bride elect, I can learn nothing more than you know; report confirms it in all its circumſtances. As to your other more important inquiry, I have done all in my power, how ſucceſsfully, time only can determine. I wrote to the only perſon I could recollect, as having any connection with Mr. Byram's family, and I am promiſed the ſatisfaction you wiſh for, on a condition I hope you will feel little reluctance in obeying, as it requires nothing more than your perſonal appearance.

"I commit this to the care of a man you may very ſafely rely on, and have given him directions to eſcort you with any friend

friend or friends you may think neceſſary to your ſafety, to London, where you will find thoſe that can, better than myſelf, inform you.

" If it ſhall have been in my power to contribute to your peace of mind, I ſhall think myſelf abundantly requited, even ſhould you be diſpoſed to ſeek your origin, and neglect me. Let me once ſee you in ſafety; let me be aſſured you are above my care, and I will inſtantly ceaſe to trouble you. All ſelfiſh conſiderations fade, when compared to the pleaſure of a diſintereſted action; and I will ſecure this pleaſure to myſelf, by ſuſpending even my beſt hopes, and till you command me to do otherwiſe, and my ſituation admits of it, by ſerving you in ſecret. But remember, Peregrina, that were you environed by a hoſt of lovers—were kings to lay down their crowns, and ſaints their croſſes, to prove their ſincerity, no one could boaſt an honeſter paſſion for you than

" AMI BONANGE."

"And with equal ſincerity do I return thy honeſt love," ſaid the heart of Peregrina, as ſhe read the concluding words. But the letter required an immediate anſwer; nay, the bearer waited for it, and an anſwer really required deliberation; for however well diſpoſed ſhe might be to truſt Ami Bonange, ſome regard was due to appearances, and ſhe knew not how to ſatisfy the kind anxiety of Mrs. Blyford, without revealing the myſtery of her good genius, for which ſhe had no permiſſion.

She went down again to the hall to aſk the man the extent of his orders: he ſaid that his maſter (but who his maſter was he would not tell) had told him the lady would be in town that night, that he was, if neceſſary, to procure a chaiſe for the purpoſe, and that in town her deſtination was Lady Cottiſbrooke's, in New Norfolk Street.

Peregrina

Peregrina was relieved from her doubts, but again embarraſſed, as ſhe now could not aſk Miſs Blyford to accompany her, as ſhe had wiſhed. But with tolerable courage, though extremely agitated, ſhe went in queſt of the ladies, and informing them that ſhe was called to Lady Cottiſbrooke's in a hurry, in hopes of hearing of her mother, begged them to expedite her journey.

"And who is to go with thee?" ſaid Mrs. Blyford.

"I muſt, I fear, go alone."

"I ſhould not chuſe, indeed, to go with thee, unaſked by friend Cottiſbrooke; but ſtill thee ſhall not go alone. Let Sarah Earle go with thee—thee does not like her, nor do I; but ſhe is honeſt, and may be uſeful."

Peregrina conſenting, Sarah was ordered to be in readineſs. Mr. Blyford's carriage was to go the firſt ſtage with her; her eſcort went forward to beſpeak a chaiſe on the road. Mrs. Blyford ſent another man ſervant, as an additional ſecurity, on her confeſſing that ſhe knew not the meſſenger ſent for her; and with ten thouſand dreads, ſhe was juſt departing, when Miſs Blyford begged to ſpeak to her in private. She was apprehenſive that Peregrina might, in her zeal for her happineſs, divulge what had paſt between them; but againſt this fear ſhe eaſily procured the ſecurity of her word.

"How art thee furniſhed with money?" ſaid careful Martha; "thee will want a great deal in fine London."

"I have a few guineas," ſaid Peregrina; "enough for my journey; and Lady Cottiſbrooke never forgets my purſe."

"I would

"I would not intrude," replied Martha, "but thee muſt remember that I ſhould like to be of uſe to thee."

With a cordial embrace they parted. Mrs. Blyford expreſſed a wiſh ſoon to ſee her young friend again; and ſhe ſet off, with a moſt uneaſy mind, and far from delighted with her companion.

CHAP. XII.

AT Byram Park, Miſs Arabella, or rather Mrs. Grubb, was whirling the wheel of fortune at a furious rate. The ſlender Marquis was every day more enamored. All Laſſiter's clerks were buſy about ſettlements: he himſelf had got ſo entirely into the good graces of the Duke and his ſon, that he was looked on as an oracle: he taught *gratis* the art of *racking tenants*, and *letting eſtates tithe-free:* he preached *ſhort leaſes* and *quarterly rents:* he projected *incloſures*, and talked of *crown-grants:* he had a *navigation-ſcheme* in his pocket, and a *tontine* in his head: he poſſeſſed the noble art of alchymy for the father, and the cup of Circe for the ſon, to whom he diſcourſed of *illiberal reſtraint*,

ſcanty allowance, *poſt obits*, and *mortgages*; of *curricles*, *phaëtons*, *cropt bays*, and *damſels fair*, till the young man believed matrimony the gate by which he was to eſcape from parental avarice, and to gain all his fooliſh head and throbbing heart had conceived and panted for. Lady Jemima had ſo well made uſe of her ſagacity reſpecting Mr. Charles Grubb, and had ſo well timed ſome mal-à-propos viſits to Arabella, that the terror of her exerting any part of her *diſcloſing* power, made her daughter as ductile as could be wiſhed; and ſhe had repeatedly promiſed that when ſhe was a Ducheſs, dear mama ſhould live like a queen; nay, indeed, the Duke himſelf had ſaid ſuch fine things of Lady Jemima, that if Mr. Laſſiter could have proved his regard for his own intereſt, as completely as Mr. Charles Grubb had done, it would not have been wonderful if the ſame day had made the mother a Ducheſs and the daughter, by the courteſy of England, a Marchioneſs. There

was

was but one circumſtance that gave the party pain; this was the obſtinate vigor of Sir Clifford, whoſe renovated ſpirits ſeemed to ſuſtain him under his decaying ſtrength, to a degree that made it to be apprehended that he would not releaſe the expectants.

Poor Broome, who with tolerable accuracy read their characters, their intrigues, and their diſtreſſes, ſtill fretted in imbecility. He ſaw Sir Clifford frequently, but found him inextricably ſhackled by his partialities, and ſo watched by his family, that had his doting afforded any lucid intervals, it was almoſt impoſſible to have availed himſelf of them. The ladies he ſaw looked on him with a jealous eye; and the elder having lately talked to him in a wonderfully civil ſtrain of a *better living*, and her *intereſt with the Duke*, who had now one vacant, he ſaw it was in contemplation to remove him, which, had the advantage been ever ſo great, was a

benefit

benefit he did not at that time chuſe to accept, any more than the invitations given him repeatedly to the *dances* at Byram Park, the *dinners* at Mr. Laſſiter's, or the *fêtes* at the Duke's.

Of the letter which Peregrina had addreſſed to the juſtice, as well as compaſſion of her grand-father, no one but Laſſiter was informed; for he, aſſiduous friend! perceiving Sir Clifford's declining faculties, and anxious to ſpare him and his ſervants trouble, was ſo obliging as to intercept his letters at the poſt-office, and thus effectually ſecured the old gentleman from ſeeing ſuch as might give him uneaſineſs. Thoſe he detained, it muſt be confeſſed, were ſeldom ſuch as he thought *of importance*; they were generally of the ſupplicating claſs, and aimed at that weak fortreſs, Sir Clifford's humanity. Thus, if he did inadvertently ruin an induſtrious tenant, or get the Baronet a few curſes, for a flinty-hearted landlord, what then? he ſaved his

pocket,

pocket, and comforted himſelf in his pious concern for his eaſe, by the old obſervation, that "what the eye never ſees the heart never rues." What uſe could it be of to diſturb a man on his death-bed with complaints?

The letter from Miſs Lamorne had, together with all other ſuſpected papers, been carefully opened; and as it was part of this diligent agent's policy, to truſt, not even his wife, whom he already began to think too cunning for him, he had, without heſitation, replied to it in a way that he doubted not would prevent all further application from that quarter.

Thus were matters circumſtanced; and chafing Broome had made a reſolution to let the parties go on a little farther, and then at once to overwhelm, at leaſt Mrs. Grubb, when one morning, after a grand ſupper given at Byram Park, to his Grace, his Lordſhip, and all the admiring country gentle-

gentlemen of the neighbourhood, juſt as the day began to dawn, Lady Jemima haſtily entered her daughter's apartment, and very properly taking no notice that ſhe was not alone, ſhe bid her riſe inſtantly, for dear Sir Clifford had rung his bell, and was found in a fit.

The young lady, however ſound aſleep when her mother began to call her, was in no danger of another nap. While haſtily putting on her clothes, ſhe ran over in her mind, probable conſequences as certain futurities, and really evinced no ſmall preſence of mind. As little was her recollection clouded, when, on entering Sir Clifford's room, ſhe ſaw his attendants hindered by their feelings, from the neceſſary exertions for his recovery; and when Lady Jemima, who ſtood at the foot of the bed, holding up her ready handkerchief to drown her voice, whiſpered to her, "*He cannot live ten minutes*;" ſhe was enough herſelf to reply, "but, good God! there

is

is no will." Such a charming thing is ſelf-poſſeſſion under ſevere trials!

This conſideration, which at the moment was abſorbed in Lady Jemima's habitual hope, and mechanical certainty of happineſs in the old man's death at any rate, gave motion to her limbs, and drew her nearer to the moribond.

Either the application of the apothecary, the prayers of his ſervants, or the rallying vigour of his conſtitution, ſaved Sir Clifford once again from the yawning grave; and in a few hours his recollection had returned, and he gave *hopes* of recovery; for at preſent the company were unanimous in *hoping* that he would live at leaſt long enough to make a will; which Laſſiter, who had been duly rouſed to his aid, aſſured them with a phlegmatic certainty, was yet to be done. Who ſhould prompt the buſineſs, was debated in the next room. Laſſiter, accuſtomed to the work, had

had no reluctance, but Lady Jemima thought it better to come from one of the family; perhaps the rogues could not truſt each other. Be that as it may, Arabella was appointed to viſit her grandfather, to beat up his pillow for him, and, handkerchief in hand, to do whatever could convince him of her great love, and his great danger; two convictions which ſhe ſaw would forward his making a will without delay, and that in her favor.

But either diſdaining even the ſhadow of ſelfiſhneſs, or fearful that if dear mama was not duly and largely remembered, ſhe might tell tales of Mr. Charles Grubb, when ſhe had, with the utmoſt delicacy, hoped that her dear grand papa had ſettled all his affairs; ſhe added, on her knees beſeeching pardon, that ſhe had no other motive for her inquiſitiveneſs, but her fear that that dear woman, Lady Jemima, who had always been a mother to her, ſhould again be left as Mr. Byram had

had left her, without a proviſion. Sir Clifford in a faint voice applauded her goodneſs, and aſſured her her wiſh ſhould be fulfilled.

The phyſician coming to make his equally diſintereſted viſit, Arabella withdrew, to report her progreſs.

Next went Lady Jemima herſelf: ſhe was ſorry to hear her beloved father thought of diſturbing himſelf by making a will. Surely if Elizabeth's mother was, as was now proved, Mr. Byram's wife, a very ſhort bequeſt of his property was ſufficient. For herſelf, as ſhe knew ſhe merited nothing, ſhe expected nothing; ſhe had experienced too much undeſerved kindneſs from him already, to aſk for more: her girls muſt learn to get their living, as their father had left them nothing; and for herſelf, Miſs Byram's attachment and promiſes of aſſiſtance were ſufficient—it did not become her now, incon-

inconſiderate as ſhe had been, to aim at independence. Sir Clifford aſſured her that both ſhe and her children ſhould be benefitted by his will, which, if ſhe would ſend for Laſſiter, he would give him directions to make.

The lawyer had gone home, and when ſent for, came in no very pleaſant agitation. That *tireſome raſcal*, Dennis, was again returned, and he had been detained half an hour to hear his tedious complaints of his London expedition in ſearch of a friend, and in contriving ſome means of locking him up till he could get rid of him, or Sir Clifford.

"And what have you done with the fool?" ſaid gracious Lady Jemima.

"Why, I have perſuaded him that it is death to him to be ſeen abroad; and as he can write a tolerable flouriſhing hand, though I doubt whether he can read it when

when he has done; I have propoſed to keep him as a clerk for a few days, and I have locked him up to make pot-hooks and hangers by himſelf."

"A good ſcheme, verily—now go in to old Cliff."

Laſſiter, an obedient huſband, obliged his lady, but not quite with the diſpoſition ſhe ſuppoſed; for finding Sir Clifford, as from his experience he expected, juſt capable to *do* an act, but hardly to *judge* of it; he took his directions, and ſoon puzzling him with law cant about *truſts and uſes*, he convinced him that it was neceſſary, if his will was deſigned to be of any effect, that *he* ſhould be nominated ſole truſtee for thoſe, in whoſe favour it was to be made. He then hied home, like a rat with a ſlice of bacon, to mumble his prey according to his own faſhion.

The

The draft was made that afternoon, and read by Laſſiter in due form to the teſtator and the ladies; he being particularly careful, as all his tranſactions had been ever fair and above-board, that thoſe whom it concerned ſhould know what he had committed to paper; he wiſhed to be certain he had not miſtaken Sir Clifford's meaning; people could not be too careful in ſuch important matters as deeds; the intereſts of whole families depended on their accuracy, and the honeſty of thoſe who made them; for his part he always counted money after his own father, for the beſt in the world might err, and he knew an inſtance of a gentleman, a client of his, &c. &c. &c.

"We are all perfectly ſatisfied," ſaid Sir Clifford, "I only wiſh to make every thing clear, that what I mean for the benefit of my family, may not be ſpent in law."

"Certainly

"Certainly—certainly—a very proper conſideration, my good Sir—I wiſh every body on their death-bed were as careful. Would you like any body elſe to overlook the papers? Perhaps Mr. Broome, though, indeed, I am afraid his greedineſs would be hurt—he will think fifty pounds very little, I fancy, if I may gueſs from his talking ſo *largely*."

"Let it be an hundred then, ſaid Sir Clifford," fearing he had not been liberal enough.

"O, no, by no means," ſaid Laſſiter; "I only juſt thought how the Levite would like fifty pounds, after he had boaſted that you deſigned him the advowſon of the living."

"I muſt have miſled him, then," ſaid Sir Clifford, "by ſomething I may have ſaid; for Broome is a very honeſt man."

The

The ſcheme of getting poor Broome's name excluded with ignominy from the will, failing, it would have been idle to have tried farther. Sir Clifford ratified by his approbation what he had heard, and the ladies made proper faces to ſhew their gratitude, the one for the noble bequeſt of *the whole of her grandfather's property*, ſubject only to the payment of ſome annuities, and a few legacies of ſmall amount; the other for a rent charge on the eſtate, of five hundred pounds annually, during the life of herſelf, or either of her daughters.

Sir Clifford intreated that no time might be loſt in ingroſſing the will, but that, in as ſimple a form as was conſiſtent with the ſafety of his property, it might be got ready immediately to be executed; Laſſiter undertook to prepare it with his own hand, and having in truth devoted the whole night to the important buſineſs, he went the next morning with the will in

his pocket to wait at Byram Park a proper hour for executing. He heard that Sir Clifford had paſſed the night quietly; and had he not ſtopt the old butler in his career of eloquence, he might probably have heard that there was leſs chance than he wiſhed of his client's embarkation on the river Styx.

Lady Jemima and Arabella, whom nothing could prevail on to quit the chamber for a better repoſe, and whom the joy in proſpect had kept tolerably vigilant nurſes, met Laſſiter, and open mouthed, began to report their obſervations: he ſtopped them to inquire what chance he had of admiſſion, and hearing that Sir Clifford had already expreſſed his impatience for his coming, he ſoon obtained an audience; and having, as ſtrenuouſly as he thought proper, urged the old gentleman not to rely wholly on him, but again to hear the will in form, and being aſſured by his avoiding this delay, that he was

ſafe,

ſafe, he called in the witneſſes *he had brought with him*, juſt *to ſave time*, and having put the pen into Sir Clifford's hand, a will was executed in due form, by which, *not in truſt*, but *for his ſole uſe*, Byram Park, and every part of the family property, except ſome ſmall legacies, left for a cover to his pretenſions, and a ſop for any Cerberus, was bequeathed to William Laſſiter, attorney at law. The will, as ſafeſt in legal hands, was committed to the cuſtody of him who made it, who now cared not how ſoon that was in his iron cheſt, or Sir Clifford in his coffin.

Mr. Broome, whom his patron's ſudden attack had more ſeriouſly and more diſintereſtedly alarmed, was amongſt the firſt to make inquiries after his reſt, and learnt from the ſervant that their maſter was then making his will; he therefore forebore ſending his meſſage in, but in his return home, being overtaken by the apothecary, he learnt to his great comfort,

that Sir Clifford, though extremely disposed to think himself at the point of death, was in reality much better, and would probably in a few days be at his usual average of health. They parted, and Broome went towards home, deeply musing.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

All this time Dennis had ſpent in durance or in ſleep: he had been kept, under pretence of his own danger, locked into his maſter's own peculiar office, where he had been employed in copying a uſeleſs paper, till the time of reſt: he had been depoſited for the night in a cloſet adjoining to his maſter's room, and had been let out in the morning to purſue his occupation, which not at all ſuiting his genius, eſpecially unaſſiſted by his morning dram, he began to think confinement a worſe puniſhment than any Mr. Broome, or even Sir Clifford, would inflict, and at the ſame time to meditate on the poſſibility of getting out at the window, and

ſtealing over to the oppoſite public houſe for a little recruit of ſpirits, unobſerved.

He ſucceeded in his ſcheme, ſo far as to get his dram in peace; but in croſſing the way to return, the only perſon he eſpied was Mr. Broome, who with folded arms, and eyes rivetted to the ground, was returning home from the Park.

Occupied as Broome's mind then was, Dennis might have paſſed him unnoticed, had he not betrayed himſelf by a doleful exclamation on his own ill fortune. Attracted by his voice, his *quondam* maſter immediately recollected him, and in gentle terms inquired why he had abſented himſelf, and where he had been. Dennis heſitated and ſtammered in a manner that ſufficiently ſhewed his contrivance to be at work on, and at a loſs for a falſity. Mr. Broome relieved him from his diſtreſs, by alarming him about Sir Clifford, of whoſe

whoſe increaſed illneſs he was totally ignorant.

It was impoſſible for the ſimplicity of Dennis to conceive that any one who expreſſed concern for another, could be really unintereſted in the good or evil of their deſtiny. He therefore, when Mr. Broome ſpoke with dejection of Sir Clifford's ſituation, and his own fears for his ſafety, inſtantly forgot the cautions of Mr. Laſſiter, and ſaw in Broome one of his old maſter's beſt friends. Soured by the confinement of his preſent employment, he was willing to riſk ſomewhat of his ſecurity to eſcape from it; and conſidering Mr. Laſſiter's houſe as a place which no news of Sir Clifford reached, he promiſed to confeſs all that had paſſed, would Mr. Broome once again admit him into his family. The matter was nearly arranged, when Laſſiter paſſed by: Broome expected him to ſpeak. Dennis awaited his wrath, but ſcouling at both, he touched

his hat to the parſon, and went on; he had gone only a few paces, when he paſſed again, and returned towards the Park with a quicker pace.

His buſineſs there was to ſpread the alarm among the faction, and if poſſible to ruin Broome in Sir Clifford's opinion. Having free acceſs to the ſick chamber, he boldly made his way thither, and reporting the return of Dennis, and the countenance given by Broome to a vagabond, whoſe deſign could be nothing leſs than the conducting a gang of his countrymen to pillage the manſion-houſe, he requeſted Sir Clifford's authority for frightening Mr. Dennis Geoghegan out of the place.

"I have no proof of his ill intentions," ſaid Sir Clifford: "the raſcal is apt to get drunk; but I believe he is honeſt."

The

The credulity of the old gentleman's nature was the *virtue* by which Mr. Laſſiter and his friends had ſo greatly benefitted, and from which they promiſed themſelves a golden harveſt; but in this inſtance it proved a little inconvenient, for nothing lawyer Laſſiter could ſay had power to terrify Sir Clifford into a ſuſpicion of *raſcal Dennis.* As little ſucceſs had he in his equally moral attempt to deduce from Mr. Broome's liſtening in the ſtreet to Dennis, a natural propenſity to harbour thieves, and promote the plans of incendiaries.

Thus failing, he had no recourſe but in a conſultation with Lady Jemima, in which they agreed to give ſuch directions to the ſervants as ſhould effectually keep Broome on the outſide of the houſe. When, therefore, after a long conference with Dennis, the parſon went again to the Park, with a reſolution, whatever conſequences might await his temerity, to tell Sir Clif-

ſord how groſsly he had been impoſed on, he was civilly informed that he could have no admiſſion. He aſked whoſe order it was, and heard to his conſolation that it was Lady Jemima's.

He returned home again, reſolved now on open war. From the communications of Dennis, he was confirmed in his belief that Miſs Byram was not the perſon ſhe repreſented; and Dennis's obſervations next day at church, whither Sir Clifford compelled the ladies regularly to go, enabling him to ſwear to the identity of Miſs Arabella, *alias Mrs. Grubb*, Mr. Broome taking him with him in a poſt chaiſe, ſet off for London to conſult a legal friend on the method he ſhould purſue.

Danger was apprehended as ſoon as his departure was known; and it being underſtood from his curate, that his ſtay would not exceed three or four days, all

of

of the party, who could with any propriety ſpeak on the occaſion, urged on the great wedding; but unfortunately for them, Sir Clifford had once, when pleaſed with hearing Mr. Broome read the marriage office, promiſed him, that if ever he had a relation, whom he could influence, a candidate for matrimony, he and he only ſhould perform the ſervice. A promiſe, however ſlightly made, was uniformly binding on the mind of the baronet, and he did not feel his conſcience at all relaxed by the near approach of that hour when its accounts were to be made up. All the eloquence of the world could not have moved him; and as his opinion of thoſe who urged him would have been far from improved by their perſeverance, they were forced, for their own ſakes, to reſt contented with his fixing the following Saturday, provided Mr. Broome, whoſe abſence and neglect had, notwithſtanding, a little piqued him, ſhould be returned.

CHAP. XIV.

PEREGRINA, after a journey, the extreme anxiety of which had been varied only by the tireſome loquacity of Mrs. Earle, who knew nothing of her views or diſtreſſes, and who was ſtill *Miſs Sally* enough to think a jaunt to *Lunnun* a glorious thing, and a reſidence amongſt muſty Quakers a miſery ſhe might now very prudently ſet at defiance, by engaging in another place.

Her joy when ſhe found that a lady of quality's houſe was to be their reſidence, would have amuſed a mind at eaſe, even without penetrating the deep ſchemes in her head of recommending herſelf to the great gentlemen of whom ſhe fancied the Coun-

Counteſs's houſe compoſed; for had honeſt Sarah been told that Lady Cottiſbrooke maintained half a dozen ſecretaries of ſtate, and as many maſters of the horſe, ſhe would not have contradicted her informer.

When, therefore, Peregrina's grateful exclamation of, "Thank God, we are arrived!" taught her that the door the chaiſe ſtopped at was Lady Cottiſbrooke's, ſhe was diſappointed at ſeeing a brick front that ranged with the ſtreet, and a few windows reflecting the light from the door lamps. Of London ſhe remembered only the great houſes of the nobility, and ſhe began to think herſelf and her annihilated three thouſand pounds, little inferior to Lady Cottiſbrooke and her pretenſions.

A coach backed from the door to let the chaiſe come up; but Peregrina was inſenſible of all but delay. The houſe door

was

was open; ſome body lent her a hand to alight; ſhe did not know it to be Hamilton Courtland; ſhe looked round for the ſtranger eſcort, but he was gone; and while Sarah, half in, half out of the chaiſe, was exclaiming, "My gemini, what a poor place!" Peregrina ſlipped up the well-known ſtairs, and bounding into the drawing-room, threw herſelf, unable to ſpeak, into Lady Cottiſbrooke's extended arms, while Lady Almerina and Lady Eſſex ſeized her hands, and Hamilton waited a pauſe to addreſs her. Sarah in the mean time was conducted to the houſekeeper's apartment.

A hearty cry relieved Peregrina's ſuſpended faculties, and enabled her to aſk Lady Cottiſbrooke if ſhe had expected her coming. She replied that ſhe had, but that the cauſe of it was very myſterious; "for," ſaid ſhe, "my information came by a penny poſt letter, without a name, but which Ham is certain comes from the ſame

ſame quarter as the warning that procured me firſt the pleaſure of your company. You ſhall ſee it."

Peregrina took the billet, and read in the hand writing of Ami Bonange, theſe words:

" YOU have an excellent heart—you can feel for the miſeries of your fellow creatures—you can participate their felicities. Peregrina Lamorne is coming to you—ſhe will be with you probably at an early hour this evening—be again a guardian to her—be the friend you have been.

" As ſoon as ſhe arrives, without a moment's unneceſſary delay, accompany her to the Royal Hotel, Pall Mall, there inquire for Lord Armathwaite's apartments; ſend in no name, but deſire to ſpeak with him alone."

" Now,"

"Now," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke, as ſhe received the myſterious paper from Miſs Lamorne, "I am ready to do exactly what I am enjoined, though I really do not underſtand it. I have the carriage at the door in waiting, and I think the ſooner you go the better. We will take Hamilton with us; I ſuppoſe you know more of the matter than we do."

"I only know," ſaid Peregrina, "from a letter I had to-day at noon, and from the man who brought it, that I have ſome chance of hearing ſome particulars reſpecting my poor mother; but I imagined it was here I was to learn them. I do not like going to Lord Armathwaite: he is brother to Lady Jemima Byram, to whom I am under no obligations; for her treatment to me has been cruel. Miſs Byram, who never was kind to me, is in his family, and I dare ſay I ſhall experience from them nothing but contempt and haugh-

haughtineſs. What can Lord Armathwaite know of my mother?"

"He is lately married," ſaid Hamilton.

"To whom?" ſaid Peregrina, with indifference.

"I forget her name—ſhe was a widow—of no family, I believe."

"Indeed, Madam," ſaid Miſs Lamorne, "I do not like to go."

"Shall I go and reconnoitre?" ſaid Hamilton. "I would with all my heart; but I am a poor ambaſſador, and with us you need not be afraid.—I will not leave the room, and I am ſure my mother would prevent your being treated cavalierly."

Peregrina reluctantly yielded, and they ſet out.

Lord

Lord Armathwaite's part in this buſineſs had been allotted him by a billet which reached him at Chartham, where he and Mrs. Halnaby were painfully watching Joanna's recovery from the effects of her ſedulous attendance on Miſs Byram, whoſe ingratitude and obduracy made every ſucceeding day an addition of vexation. The billet contained only theſe words:

"DO you know any particulars concerning Joanna Doveridge, daughter to the laſt Lord Doveridge?

"Direct your anſwer to A. B. Parliament coffee-houſe.

"Reſt quiet—you will hear from me again."

This laconic query, as ſomething to amuſe the extreme dejection of Lady Armathwaite, the Earl ſhewed to her: curioſity was almoſt extinct in her boſom: ſhe

ſhe could not believe that the world had aught but miſery to beſtow; for ſhe judged, and ſurely ſhe was excuſable, ſhe judged from her own experience; and ſhe could call Heaven to witneſs, that though few, "evil had been her days."

Lord Armathwaite, aſſuming the ſtyle of his correſpondent, anſwered by the return of the poſt,

"YES; ſhe is my wife.

"ARMATHWAITE."

And with leſs *ſang froid* than his lady, waited farther communication.

A ſpecial meſſenger on horſeback, more expeditious than the mail, on the following evening left another billet at Chartham, and galloped off, as if fearful of diſcovery: the ſervants ſaid he looked like a gentleman, but did not ſay more than to aſk if he was right. His billet was this:

"IN-

" INSTANTLY ſet out for London—take with you Joanna Doveridge—go to to the Royal Hotel, Pall Pall, and wait there till you are aſked for."

" *I* cannot go," ſaid Lady Armathwaite, when the Earl haſtily read the injunction. " My exiſtence can be of importance to no one—the world was always my enemy, and I for ever have renounced it."

" You muſt not talk ſo, my Joanna," ſaid Mrs. Halnaby; " I ſhall inſiſt on your going. With your huſband there can be no danger, and perhaps the happineſs of ſome one elſe, if not your own, may depend on it. I will go with you."

" But what am I to do with my daughter?"

" She will be very ſafe here; or you may take her with you."

" I had

"I had rather take her—I ſhall be afraid of ſome miſchief if ſhe is left with the ſervants."

The point was preſently ſettled—the coach was ordered for an early hour in the morning. Mrs. Lewis was taken to attend the ladies, and by five in the afternoon the party were in Pall Mall, and Miſs Byram was in raptures with the new exiſtence ſhe was introduced to.

Lady Armathwaite, diſguſted with the buſtle, and extremely fatigued with her journey, had retired after dinner to lie down. Mrs. Halnaby was ſitting in her room watching her. Miſs Byram was committed to the care of Mrs. Lewis, and lolling out of the two pair of ſtairs window to regale her eyes with the lamps and flambeaus, when Lord Armathwaite was told that two ladies and a gentleman inquired for him.

He

He desired they might be introduced.

Lady Cottisbrooke led the way; Peregrina in her morning dress, and with her veil down, followed in the expectation of nothing pleasant. Captain Courtland, all curiosity, brought up the rear.

Chairs being placed, the Earl begged the company to be seated; he looked earnestly at Peregrina's figure, but her veil was, by candle-light impenetrable, and his eyes returning to Lady Cottisbrooke, he said, "you are a stranger to me, Madam, may I know your business?"

"I could almost, my Lord, ask that question of you: I come here with this young lady, in consequence of a letter I received this morning." The Countess then produced it: he read it, and smiling, answered, "This seems the counterpart of that which brought me hither, which I will produce to you when we are a little better

better acquainted. On whoſe account pray am I honored with this viſit ?"

" On this young lady's," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke.

" Then may I aſk *you*," ſaid he to Peregrina, " how I can aſſiſt you ? What is *your* buſineſs ?"

" I come," ſaid ſhe, throwing up her veil, and burſting into tears—" I come only to aſk if you knew my mother."

" Your mother ! Who was your mother ?"

" Speak for me, Lady Cottiſbrooke, for I cannot."

Her Ladyſhip immediately related what ſhe had learnt of Miſs Lamorne, in their way to Pall Mall, which extended no farther than to inform Lord Armathwaite,

that by accident ſhe had heard that her mother, whom ſhe ſuppoſed dead, was Joanna Doveridge; that it was feared her conduct had been faulty, but that her daughter wiſhed for every ſatisfaction reſpecting her memory.

"I can give her none," ſaid the Earl; "there muſt be ſome miſtake; Joanna, the daughter of Lord Doveridge, had but one daughter, Elizabeth Byram, and ſhe is now in the houſe."

"There can be no Elizabeth Byram but myſelf," ſaid Peregrina.

"I will ſend to lady Armathwaite, if you pleaſe," ſaid his Lordſhip, "or Miſs Byram ſhall come to you."

"Your lady I am a ſtranger to," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke; "ſhe cannot, I ſuppoſe, ſay any thing on this buſineſs."

" If you are Lady Cottiſbrooke, and I think I heard this young lady call you ſo, my wife is no ſtranger to you. Let me ſend to her."

" Did ſhe know my mother?" ſaid Peregrina, crying.

" Good God!" exclaimed Lord Armathwaite, " what a ſtrange miſunderſtanding! Why, Lady Armathwaite was Joanna Doveridge—is that a ſecret?"

" Be cautious," ſaid Hamilton, " Miſs Lamorne is fainting."

The door was opened, a ſaſh was thrown up, and with almoſt equal tenderneſs on the part of her friends and the ſtrange Earl, ſhe was recovered.

Is my mother your wife, my Lord? Did you ſay ſo?" ſaid ſhe eagerly, but faintly.

"I am ſorry to ſay," he replied, "ſhe cannot be your mother, but ſhe was Miſs Doveridge, then Mrs. Byram, now my wife."

"Then ſhe is—indeed ſhe is my mother."

"I will ſend for her—but pray, pray do not flatter yourſelf—you diſtreſs me extremely." He rang the bell.

"I do not flatter myſelf, indeed, my Lord," ſaid Peregrina, "ſhe muſt be my mother—I am ſure ſhe is my mother."

"What proof have you of it? I could almoſt wiſh it were ſo; for upon my life I am intereſted in your diſtreſs, but it is impoſſible—O, here comes Lady Armathwaite."

Peregrina had at the moment in her hand the miniature of her mother, which ſhe

ſhe meant to produce as a proof; but on ſight of Lady Armathwaite, whom ſhe inſtantly recogniſed as her Margate friend, ſhe ruſhed forward in a diſtraction of aſtoniſhment; the picture dropped on the carpet, and ſhe ſtood motionleſs as a ſtatue, while Lady Armathwaite, who had not yet been made acquainted with the arrival of the perſons expected, with perturbed joy welcomed them as her former acquaintance, and in her weak ſtate of health could ſcarcely bear even *this* ſhock.

Being ſeated on a ſopha, whither Peregrina followed her, ſhe began to make the uſual inquiries; but finding Lady Cottiſbrooke extremely at a loſs for words, and on caſting her eyes towards Miſs Lamorne, whoſe hand ſhe held, perceiving her in tears, ſhe grew alarmed, and trembling begged to know what ſo agitated her.

" O, you are my mother; I am ſure you are my mother," anſwered Peregrina, reclining her aching head on Lady Armathwaite's ſhoulder.

" I, your mother! my dear," ſhe replied, without emotion; " you have heard me ſay, indeed, that I wiſhed it, but it is not my happy lot. What can have made you imagine it?"

" O, the picture! the picture!" was all ſhe could anſwer.

Lord Armathwaite had picked up the miniature, examined it by a light at the farther end of the room, and then withdrawn.

Peregrina was in agonies at miſſing him and the miniature: ſhe could proceed no farther in her explanation, but raved for the picture; and juſt as Lady Armathwaite, whom her violence terrified, had rung

rung a bell near her to inquire for the Earl, he entered, and requeſted to ſpeak in private with the young lady. Hamilton inſiſting on being allowed to accompany her: Lord Armathwaite ſmiled at his circumſpection, and permitted him to follow to the next apartment, where in great emotion ſtood Mrs. Halnaby. She kindly embraced Miſs Lamorne, of whoſe errand ſhe knew ſcarcely the outline, but tried to ſoothe her, as if ſhe ſuſpected a derangement of her intellects.

"You are very good," ſaid poor Peregrina; "indeed I am rejoiced to ſee you; but I am almoſt diſtracted—my heart will break, if I have not the picture again. Why did you take it away, Sir? Pray give it me—my father gave it me when he died—he ſaid it would tell me who I was."

"Good God!" ſaid Mrs. Halnaby, in a low voice, "ſhe has loſt her ſenſes."

"Stay," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, as he ſeated himſelf in a chair next to that in which he had placed Miſs Lamorne; "be calm for your own ſake, my dear young lady; here is your picture—keep it yourſelf, and be aſſured you are with thoſe who will pay the utmoſt attention to what you ſay. Let me call for a glaſs of wine for you, and then you ſhall tell me as diſtinctly as you can, what you mean by ſaying Lady Armathwaite is your mother. She knows of no ſuch daughter as you, though I am ſure ſhe would be proud to own you, for ſhe often talks of you."

"She *muſt* own me," ſaid Peregrina ſharply, "for I am ſure I am her daughter." She then with great difficulty, having ſwallowed the wine brought her, gave a tolerably coherent account of all ſhe knew of herſelf, and with inexpreſſible joy Lord Armathwaite owned her proofs ſubſtantial, though they fell ſhort of aſcertaining her identity. He told her that Lady Armathwaite's

thwaite's injured ſtate of health rendered every precaution that could ſave her ſpirits neceſſary: he repeated what he had before ſaid of the Elizabeth Byram then in their family, and endeavoured to prepare her for a doubtful conteſt, to which he candidly owned his previous acquaintance with her merits, by his lady's report, and the intereſt he felt for her diſtreſs, made him wiſh ſucceſs: he then produced to her a ſmall piece of written paper, which in the fall of the miniature picture he ſaid had eſcaped from it. Peregrina could not believe it had any ſuch contents.

"I aſſure you on my honor," ſaid he, "the picture opened; the back ſeparated on one ſide from the ſetting, and the paper is a certificate of your birth."

"I want no forgeries," ſaid Peregrina, "to ſubſtantiate my claim. I aſk only to be acknowledged, and then I will retire to the dependance I am, I ſee, doomed

to——I am ſure Heaven will not permit me to be denied by my own mother."

"For my part," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, "I with all my ſoul wiſh well to your cauſe, though I fear your vehemence, if you are right, will be almoſt fatal to my wife. If you ſuſpect me of mocking you, only look at the picture, and when you are convinced it might contain this paper, I will ſhew you the contents."

She took out the miniature, which in her diſtracted terror of loſing it, ſhe had dropped into her boſom, and ſhe could not doubt Lord Armathwaite's veracity, when he taught her how to ſeparate the parts, and ſhe ſaw a ſpace ſufficient for the paper between the gold and the ivory. She now begged to ſee what was written, and finding it a full recognition of Elizabeth, as the daughter of Lambert Byram, and Joanna Doveridge, with the date of their marriage, and her birth, ſhe exclaimed,

claimed, "This then it was that my dear father told me would certify my birth," and dropping on her knees, with ſtreaming eyes and claſped hands, in frantic devotion ſhe begged "that he who left not himſelf without a witneſs, would regard the low eſtate of his handmaid, and plead her cauſe in the hearts of his creatures."

Mrs. Halnaby, affected even to tears, could ſay nothing to calm her. Courtland, in univerſal tremor, ſpoke to her in accents of hope, while Lord Armathwaite, every fibre of whoſe heart, accuſtomed as it was from early days to ſuffering, was wrung by the energy of her character, could no otherwiſe be of ſervice to her than by raiſing her from the ground, and beſeeching her not to hinder her return to quiet, by giving way to ſuch emotions. He obſerved to her, that her violence might be death to her mother, if ſhe did not repreſs it, before he introduced her to Lady Armathwaite.

" Then, my Lord, you *do* acknow-knowledge me as the daughter of ——. O, Heavens! I know not by what name to call my mother."

" You may call her very ſafely *my wife*," ſaid the Earl, endeavouring to cheer her by a ſmile.—" Yes, from my ſoul, I do believe we have been groſsly impoſed on, and that Providence will reſtore us to happineſs in reſtoring you to us; but ceaſe, my deareſt girl—try to compoſe yourſelf, that I may take you to Lady Armathwaite, and haſten a ſolution of this myſtery. While you calm your ſpirits, I will go and talk to your mother."

" *My mother!*" repeated Peregrina, as he quitted the room; " O, my dear Madam, even Lord Armathwaite himſelf, though the brother of cruel Lady Jemima, who would have buried me in the Eaſt Indies, even *he* ſays I have a mother. O, how proud I ſhall feel if I am allowed to call

call her mother. I am ſure Lady Armathwaite ſeems too good to be aſhamed of me. I have never done any harm, though I know very little of the world. Where is the other Elizabeth? I ſuppoſe it is Miſs Byram; poor thing! only think of being made to deceive; I dare ſay ſhe was obliged to it. I hope my mother will not be unkind to her—ſhe will be ſadly puniſhed at beſt—but I am ſure my mother is too good to take any advantage of her—my mother—O, my mother! Captain Courtland, indeed you are very patient with me and my folly—but only think what it is for me, who never knew I had a mother, to find mine now."

Hamilton would have expreſſed his ſympathy, but her tongue was not to be ſtopped. "My dear Mrs. Halnaby," ſaid ſhe, "I diſtreſs you; but I cannot help it—indeed I am very happy; for I am ſure my mother will be convinced. But, O gracious heaven," ſaid ſhe, ſinking in her chair,

"it is almoſt too much for me." She then became quiet, and her tears, which Mrs. Halnaby could neither herſelf try to ſtop, nor permit Courtland to remonſtrate againſt, relieved her."

While ſhe was thus exhauſting her ſpirits in the agitation of her mind, Lady Armathwaite remained in a ſullen oppoſition to every idea Lady Cottiſbrooke would have awakened: ſhe had been ſo long habituated to the miſery of conſidering Miſs Byram as her own daughter, that ſhe ſeemed to prefer the evil ſhe was acquainted with, to a hope that might at laſt deceive her; but when Lord Armathwaite rejoined them, and to her queſtions about the frantic girl, anſwered, that her prepoſſeſſion deſerved conſideration, and that he began to ſuſpect very foul play on the part of Lady Jemima, ſhe earneſtly begged that ſhe might not be tortured with ſuſpenſe, or deluded with a viſion of unreal happineſs.

The

The Earl then coolly related what Miſs Lamorne had reported of herſelf; and frequently reminding her that nothing yet could prove her identity, he cautiouſly communicated the circumſtance of the picture, and remarked, that at leaſt Miſs Byram, who it was pretended was beſt entitled to her father's kindneſs, had no ſuch teſtimony to ſhew.

"But it may be her right, and ſurreptitiouſly obtained from her."

"Do you not think, with ſuch a temper as her's, you would have heard of the outrage?"

"She might not know of it; I am ignorant of the circumſtances of Mr. Byram's death, and previous illneſs — frequent frauds have been practiſed. If this young woman, Miſs Lamorne, has any connexion with the family, ſhe muſt be Mr. Byram's, and your ſiſter's eldeſt daughter; and

and I have little doubt that ſhe is ſo, and has eſcaped from the care of her friends; for you know Lady Jemima told you, when ſhe gave up Elizabeth to you, that her own daughter had been kept in the north, that ſhe was called Elizabeth, and that ſhe was in perſon and abilities what could be wiſhed. I believe too, that Mr. Byram died at his country houſe, where I ſuppoſe this girl then was. I have little doubt therefore that ſhe is your ſiſter's daughter, and I wiſh I could perſuade myſelf ſhe had been the perſon deceived, for then I ſhould think leſs ill of her than I do now. She muſt be a very bad young woman, and I dare ſay well merits the character you had of her; though I think had Lady Jemima been as little partial to *my* daughter, ſhe would have been more juſt. Miſs Lamorne, or Miſs Byram, or whatever ſhe chuſes to call herſelf, is a very beautiful and a very charming young woman, but ſhe muſt be very deceitful, and I have only to repent the accident that brought me acquainted with her."

" Will you ſee her yourſelf?" ſaid Lord Armathwaite.

" I had rather not, for it diſtreſſes me; but if you wiſh it, I can have no objection."

His Lordſhip waiting for no other permiſſion, fetched the exulting Peregrina, whom Courtland and Mrs. Halnaby followed, not doubting that they were called to the delightful ſcene of her acknowledgment.

CHAP. XV.

But Lady Armathwaite was inflexible, and when Peregrina on her knees intreated only her maternal benediction, ſhe with averted eyes, and in convulſed agitation, begged that ſhe might be releaſed from an importunity her ſpirits could not bear, and her judgment could not ſanction.

"Surely," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke, "this is unjuſt prejudice. I do not ſay that Miſs Lamorne's identity is yet proved, but if I may judge of her from my acquaintance with her, and I have ſeen her in ſome trying ſituations, ſhe is incapable of deception, and merits the utmoſt reſpect and eſteem. I muſt not ſee her ſo treated: I am her voluntary guardian: ſhe

ſhe relies on my care, and juſtice *ſhall* be done her. If I had found her crafty, deſigning, or ſelfiſh, I might ſuſpect as your Ladyſhip does, but ſhe is an artleſs girl, and excepting the ſingularity of her having ſome preſiding friend whom ſhe correſponds with, and who I believe is not known to herſelf, I never ſaw any myſtery about her that was not to be reſolved by the misfortunes of her life, and that was not excuſed by the delicacy every one muſt feel, whom the hand of neceſſity depreſſes from their natural ſituation."

"I would not be thought pert," ſaid Courtland, "nor does it become me, in my ſituation, to make the nature of my intereſt for our amiable friend a doubtful point; but it behoves me in her preſent diſtreſs, when I ſee her really treated with ſeverity, to vindicate her, as far as my knowledge will enable me, from the ſuſpicions which I learn from my mother have been caſt on her. My acquaintance with Miſs

Lamorne

Lamorne gave riſe to a very tender regard for her, which I inconſiderately avowed. She was then, in her own judgment, entirely dependent on our family; and my view was, I confeſs, privately to have married her, and riſked all conſequences. I knew that I poſſeſſed her friendſhip and her good opinion, and I hoped that this, together with the precarioufneſs of her comforts, might induce her to liſten to me. She honorably conſulted my mother, who, attached to her by her uncommon merit, and too earneſt for my happineſs, would have made any ſacrifice to have brought about our union; but Miſs Lamorne herſelf oppoſed it, leſt her want of fortune might diſtreſs my family: ſhe quitted my mother's houſe to leſſen my uneaſineſs: ſhe moſt diſintereſtedly recalled me from an error into which my paſſion for her had led me; and I may ſay, ſhe has ſacrificed her intereſt to her idea of juſtice. What were my ſecret reaſons for relinquiſhing her, I am not at liberty to

divulge,

divulge, — ſhe is ignorant of them :— but can ſuch a young woman be ſuſpected of fraud ? the *man* that intimates it muſt prove it to *me*."

" I am very willing to ſuppoſe," ſaid Lady Armathwaite, " that Miſs Lamorne has been deceived—ſhe has been brought up under a falſe deſcription—ſhe may be, I grant, Lady Jemima Byram's daughter, but ſhe is not *mine*."

" Lady Jemima's!" repeated Peregrina ; " *I*, Lady Jemima's daughter ? I am ſure ſhe would not ſay it."

" But ſhe has intimated it, my beſt friend," ſaid Lord Armathwaite mildly to her, " you will therefore admit that there is ſome difficulty to be overcome. When I went, about a year ago, to inquire after Elizabeth, the daughter of Mr. Byram, by his firſt marriage, my ſiſter, Lady Jemima, told me, and I am ſorry to be obliged

obliged to mention it, that the perverſeneſs of her own daughter's,—her eldeſt daughter's temper, had induced her and Mr. Byram to make an exchange; to educate Elizabeth as her daughter, and to ſend her daughter into the country as Elizabeth."

"And who," ſaid Peregrina, with uplifted hands and eyes—"who could believe Lady Jemima? Was it likely ſhe would thus renounce her own daughter?"

"As likely," ſaid Lady Armathwaite, "as that ſhe ſhould, as ſhe muſt in the other caſe have done, renounce her daughter to me, which I am as little inclined as you can be, to ſuppoſe any mother would do."

"Come, my dear Madam," ſaid Peregrina, weeping, and going up to Lady Cottiſbrooke, "I muſt ſtill be a burden to you; take me away, I beſeech you; I

expected

expected cruelty, but not from Lady Armathwaite."

Lady Cottiſbrooke roſe indignantly to go.

"O, dear! dear!" ſaid Mrs. Halnaby, "how diſtreſſing all this is! Sure, my Joanna, you are too haſty; why do you not ſend for Miſs Byram?"

"Send for her, if you pleaſe," ſaid Lady Armathwaite; "ſhe can tell you nothing more than that ſhe believes her name to be Elizabeth Byram."

"But ſhe would know Miſs Lamorne," ſaid Mrs. Halnaby.—"I will fetch her."

"You muſt not tell her your errand," ſaid Lord Armathwaite.

Mrs. Halnaby departed. Lady Cottiſbrooke and her ſon tried to raiſe Peregrina's

grina's hopes; and she was beginning to expect justice from Miss Byram's lips, when Mrs. Halnaby returned in the utmost consternation, and said Miss Byram was not to be found.

Lady Armathwaite, conscious only of the present distress, rang the bell furiously, and inquired for her servant.

Mrs. Lewis entered, with her apron at her inflamed eyes, and sobbing violently, she declared she knew nothing of Miss: she had only left her to fetch her a glass of water, and returning up stairs, she lost her way, and before she could find it, Miss was gone.

The house was instantly in an uproar; no one could give the smallest account of the missing lady. Lady Armathwaite could only repeat, that she was certain some interested person had taken Elizabeth out of the way; and Lady Cottisbrooke perceiving

ing the effect this ſuggeſtion was likely to have on Peregrina, inſtantly prepared to leave the houſe with her. She told Lord Armathwaite ſhe ſhould ſend early in the morning, in hopes of hearing Miſs Byram was found; and he, inclined to blame his lady's inflexibility, offered to call in New Norfolk-ſtreet, to talk the matter further over. The propoſition was gladly accepted by Peregrina's friends, but ſhe herſelf was almoſt out of all condition of underſtanding it. Captain Courtland lifted her into the coach, where ſhe remained, unable to reſiſt its motion, and nearly in a ſtate of torpor, till ſhe ſtopped at Lady Cottiſbrooke's. She was then lifted out by Hamilton and one of the ſervants, and carried to the drawing-room, where her ſtupor ſtill continuing, in ſpite of every endeavor, ſhe was ſoon conveyed to her chamber, where Lady Almerina, no longer influenced by a diſtinction of rank, or her own ſuperiority, herſelf undreſſed her, and

paſſed

paſſed the night in very meritorious endeavors to mitigate her grief.

Without the aid of ſleep, and far more indebted to her own natural good temper, and her moral excellence, than to any argument even the novel kindneſs of Lady Almerina could enforce, ſhe was tolerably calm by the morning; and when Lady Cottiſbrooke at her firſt riſing, came to make anxious inquiries, and to offer her every conſolation in her power, ſhe found her rational and reſigned, though extremely dejected and exhauſted by the agitations of the preceding evening.

"I have got a letter for you, my love," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke; "but as I have not preſumed to open it; I am almoſt afraid of its contents. Mrs. Blyford's man, who was at the door when it came, ſays the meſſenger was the ſame that accompanied you part of the way to town.

Peregrina

Peregrina raiſing her head from the pillow to look at the direction, knew the hand to be that of Ami Bonange; and with trembling impatience read to herſelf theſe words:

"I AM ſincerely grieved for yeſterday evening's ſucceſs—I meant it better—I tremble for the conſequences of your diſappointment. My heart bled when I ſaw you lifted into your carriage.—But be comforted, my Peregrina—all may yet be well. I have traced out Broome, who married your father and mother—for *I* have no doubts: I am now going to fetch him up from his living. Let me conjure you to wait patiently; for though you may imagine that Broome's teſtimony can go no farther than to proving the marriage, I have heard lately of ſuch proceedings at Byram Park, as convince me he is, without knowing it, promoting your intereſt.

" I dare not ſay, for *my* ſake be at peace; but certainly till you forbid my hopes, I may aſſure you, that ſhould the whole world riſe againſt you, you ſhall ever find an unalterable friend in

" AMI BONANGE."

A little comforted, though ſtill ſuſpicious of all comfort, ſhe left her bed, and prepared to receive Lord Armathwaite, who at an early hour was with them.

" How is my mother, my Lord? How has ſhe paſſed the night?" were her firſt queſtions.

" Do not, my dear," ſaid he, " indulge yourſelf in ſuppoſitions that it will be painful to correct. My wife is far from well to-day; but Miſs Byram was preſently found laſt night; ſhe had, for ſhe is a terrible girl to manage—ſhe had got out for the childiſh pleaſure of looking into the ſtreet, and a gentleman in the houſe, who had

had been ſo kind as to go out in queſt of her, ſoon brought her back: ſhe muſt be watched like a priſoner. But I am ſorry to ſay that I am diſappointed in a hope I had conceived from the ill-will ſhe has always appeared to me to bear us. I really did think ſhe would gladly have owned any thing to get away; but ſhe ſteadily perſiſts in it, that ſhe is the perſon you think yourſelf."

"Well," replied Peregrina, "I reſt content—I had rather be the ſufferer than the deceiver; and if the proving my identity is ſo painful to my mother, I would rather remain in dependence and obſcurity all my life."

"You deſerve a better fate," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, turning from her to hide the expreſſion of his features; "I ſhall not fail to tell Lady Armathwaite how amiable your conduct is."

"Do you think," ſaid Peregrina, "my Lord, that if Lady Armathwaite can be convinced I was not acceſſary to the fraud, even ſhould I be found in the wrong, ſhe would forgive me, and allow me occaſionally to ſee her, for it would be a very great pleaſure to me?"

"I will certainly mention your wiſh, and you may depend on my beſt offices."

The matter was then diſcuſſed fully. The Earl was ſtill diſpoſed to belief, on the evidence of Peregrina's merit; and perhaps not a little influenced by her perſonal recommendations, and the compariſon between her and the reigning princeſs. With the kindeſt expreſſions, and at leaſt a ſuſpended judgment, he left Miſs Lamorne to ruminate on what had paſt, and to puzzle herſelf to find out how Ami Bonange could ſee her come away from Pall Mall the night before.

And

And now the yet unexperienced heart of Peregrina felt in all its force that native ſentiment which renders the approbation and protection of the one ſex, as the moſt requiſite, the moſt valuable poſſeſſion of the other. On Ami Bonange, whoſoever he might be, for unworthy of her truſt ſhe could not think him, ſhe ſtill in all its ſtorms repoſed her oppreſſed mind. She knew herſelf not deſtitute of a moſt powerful friend: ſhe knew all his actions to be guided by that which gave them half their value, a ſincere affection, not ſuch a paſſion as could degrade her, or as ſhe needed to fear, but one that had for its aim her happineſs, and which, ſo far from endangering the moral ſenſe in which ſhe had been ſo ſtrictly educated, was the beſt fitted to encourage her againſt the evils of this life, and to fortify her againſt its deluſions. She thought, that though Lady Armathwaite ſhould prove inexorable, and ſhould Lady Cottiſbrooke's family arrangements oblige her to decline her protection,

as ſhe imagined muſt be, when the Earl returned, that ſhould Martha Blyford overcome her ſcruples, and on becoming Courtland's wife forget her, ſtill when once Ami Bonange ſhould avow himſelf, ſhe could bear her misfortunes.

Had not the intimation in his billet prohibited her, ſhe would gladly have committed the effuſions of her heart to paper for his peruſal; but not knowing how to addreſs him with any certainty of ſucceſs, ſhe amuſed herſelf in writing to Mrs. Blyford a detail of her woes, for her man, who was to ſet out the next morning, to carry to her. She had juſt ſealed her letter, when Lady Cottiſbrooke came to her, and no longer able to poſtpone her maternal intereſt, ſhe ſpoke to her at large on the ſubject of Martha Blyford, and the chances of Hamilton's ſucceſs.

She—and ſurely if it was a fault, it was a venial one, ſaw her younger ſon's merits

rits in a light that reached not the defects Peregrina thought ſhe had obſerved in his character: the verſatility ſhe herſelf had aſcribed to him while at Margate, ſeemed now forgotten, though ſhe could no longer fancy Miſs Lamorne had fixed his wandering heart. Her Ladyſhip appeared to think her dear Hamilton could not err, at the ſame time that her language implied a cenſure of his paſſion for Peregrina, who, however, little inclined to heap odium on one to whom ſhe was certainly very highly indebted, could not compliment the ſteadineſs of his partialities.

Concerning Martha Blyford, ſhe very frankly gave her opinion, ſaying as her heart dictated, whatever could make Lady Cottiſbrooke wiſh well to Hamilton, in his application to Miſs Blyford; ſhe could not diſapprove the plan propoſed, which was that of Captain Courtland's ſeeing Mr. Blyford on the buſineſs, at the firſt opportunity; nor could ſhe help admiring Ha-

milton's humble penitence, when on joining them, and queſtioning Miſs Lamorne on the miſchief he had done, and was in agonies to repair, he declared himſelf ready, if his profeſſion was the objection, to part with his commiſſion. His mother drily aſked him, if he would not go one ſtep farther, and turn Quaker; but he aſſured himſelf that this would not be required, and hoped that one ſacrifice on each ſide would bring them to an agreement.

In a gloom of the moſt diſtreſſing anxiety, which nothing but a viſit from Lord Armathwaite relieved, paſſed Sunday and Monday, in which time Joanna, ſtill dreading farther impoſition, rejected every offer of conviction from argument, and ſeemed more than ever to ſet her heart on Miſs Byram, who, better tempered than uſual, condeſcended to coax her into a compliance with all her wiſhes. Accompanied by Mrs. Halnaby, who could refuſe nothing to Joanna, ſhe was permitted to ſpend the

the morning of Monday, and a limited ſum of money, in the purſuit and purchaſe of trumpery; and in the evening Lord Armathwaite, whoſe love for his wife would not allow him to heſitate, under certain reſtrictions on the young lady's dreſs, language, and deportment, mortified himſelf by taking her to the theatre, while Joanna liſtened to Mrs. Halnaby in ſilence, or controverted with hopeleſs ſteadineſs the poſſibilities ſhe adduced.

CHAP. XVI.

DISTRESSING as was the ſituation of poor Peregrina, thus rejected, where ſhe had placed her hopes of experiencing the untaſted pleaſures of maternal tenderneſs, and anxious as were all her friends for a deciſion in her favor, none of her or their ſufferings were to be compared to the ſuſpicions, the miſgivings, the terrors, the deſpair, that lacerated and corroded the hearts of Lady Jemima and her party. The curate had been compelled to write to Mr. Broome, by the firſt poſt after his departure, to urge his return by the appointed Saturday. The Duke and his ſon were, in a civil way, watched like ſuſpected perſons, leſt by any means unpleaſant tidings ſhould reach their ears.

Of

Of Sir Clifford there was little danger, for he as yet did not leave the houſe, and all his letters were properly examined; but the greateſt of all miſeries conſiſted in the mutual ſuſpicion the party entertained one of another. Lady Jemima ſuſpected from Laſſiter's reluctance to produce the will, even to her, that it was not quite of the tenor he deſcribed: he was not without ſuſpicions that his right honorable wife, who he perceived lent no unwilling ear to the ſmooth compliments of the widower Duke, might, under his protection, and in poſſeſſion of ſecrets ruinous to her huſband, oppoſe herſelf to his intereſt, and become a formidable enemy. Both feared ſome violent diſturbance on the part of Arabella, whoſe good underſtanding with Mr. Charles Grubb was now a ſecret to none but thoſe whom it moſt concerned: they imagined, for they did not believe it her intention to carry the farce to the church, by ſuffering the ceremony to be read there, that ſhe relied on Sir Clifford's

partiality for her, and had it in contemplation to throw herſelf on his mercy; and if ſhe was married to Grubb, it was thought not unlikely that ſhe might procure a freſh will, accommodated to her circumſtances, and utterly ſubverſive of that the other legatees, for reaſons beſt known to themſelves, ſo highly approved of.

The fears of Arabella muſt be confeſſed ſtill better founded, and her dangers more to be apprehended. She knew it to be in the power of her mother to ruin her, and ſhe could not give her credit for forbearing, ſhould opportunity preſent itſelf. She bore no great good will towards Mr. Laſſiter, with whoſe near relationſhip to herſelf ſhe was not acquainted; but ſhe could not doubt from his forced civilities to her, that he conſidered her as a rival in Sir Clifford's favor, whom he would gladly remove if it could be effected without danger to himſelf; and being aware of his privity to her deception ſhe

hated, while ſhe ſneaked to him. Mrs. Browne, though not quite ſo deep as the reſt in the plot, had penetration enough to ſee on how ſlight a baſis of deception it was ſupported, and feared all parties, even down to Mr. Charles Grubb, who was at preſent extremely ſociable in the houſe-keeper's room, but who paſſing ſtill there for a gentleman of diſtinction *in his way*, and with Miſs Byram for a *real* gentleman, in his turn feared, and every day expected his downfall.

There was but one ſentiment in which they all agreed, and that was in the utmoſt dread of Mr. Broome, who, quiet in his deportment, humble in his manners, timid in his temper, and endued with little beyond plain good ſenſe, improved by learning, and made valuable by thorough integrity, was yet, though the eaſieſt depreſſed, the leaſt likely to be ſhaken from his duty. Of this ſeemingly powerleſs being, who, ſhunning the world and its cabals,

cabals, could have lived ten years in a village without knowing the faces of the inhabitants, and who, in the general courſe of things, deteſted all inquiry into the tranſactions of his neighbors, who, in the abſtraction of his ſtudies, might have been made to believe any thing of the faſhions of the world,—did a *gang*, for they deſerve no better appellation! of the moſt crafty, deep-witted impoſtors, all aiming at their own ſeparate intereſts, and practiſing on a man the moſt eaſy of all the creation to be duped, ſtand in awe! and to the deſtruction of their peace and reſt did they gueſs at his movements, and endeavour to fortify their omnipotence againſt his imbecility.

Mr. Broome had got about thirty miles on his way towards London, when a young gentleman in a poſt-chaiſe, but unattended by a ſervant, inquired for him at his houſe, and hearing he was gone to town,

town, obtained a direction for him, as if deſigning to follow him. While he waited for a freſh carriage and horſes, he aſked many queſtions of the ſervants reſpecting the family at the Park; and then declining to leave his name or buſineſs, he, by favor of a clear moon, ſet off again by the way he came.

Broome and Dennis getting ſafe to town a little after midnight, took up their abode at an inn in Oxford Street, and not expecting any inquiries after them ſo early, thought not of the genteeler coffee-houſe to which letters were to be forwarded, till the evening.

The day was ſpent in queſt of lawyers, and after a variety of advice, it was decided that the beſt teſt of Miſs Byram's claim to the honors ſhe enjoyed at Byram Park, would be to court opponents by a public advertiſement, for the production

production of Elizabeth, the daughter of the honorable Joanna Doveridge.

On coming in the evening to his coffee-houſe, Mr. Broome was told a gentleman, who had almoſt every hour of the day inquired for him, was then waiting up ſtairs. Broome, never paſſionately fond of ſtrangers, would have got ſome previous information before he introduced himſelf, but the gentleman had no peculiar marks, and the parſon rubbing his ſhoes on the mat at the foot of the ſtairs, could only proteſt that he was a horrid dirty figure to ſee a ſtranger, and bolted forward to ſtun his riſing timidity, leaving Dennis with a ſtrict charge to drink nothing till he ſaw him.

Their conference, it is to be preſumed, was important, for it laſted, notwithſtanding Broome's fatigue, till the clock had ſtruck one in the morning, when they parted,

parted, with a promiſe to meet again at ten o'clock: the ſtrange gentleman in no way divulging who he was, or how intereſted in, or even acquainted with the buſineſs of Mr. Broome's journey; but giving him every information he was in queſt of, reſpecting Joanna Doveridge and her daughter.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

AFTER Lady Cottiſbrooke's hint at the myſterious intercourſe of Peregrina, with her *good genius*, it was become almoſt neceſſary to inform her of its nature; and as it was on Ami Bonange alone, that her nearly expiring hopes depended, ſhe found it impoſſible, without a much larger ſhare of hypocritical prudence than ſhe poſſeſſed, to be any longer reſerved on the ſubject. She, therefore, ſuppreſſing only the flattering opinion her *incognito* friend entertained of her, and his conſequent predilection in her favor, deſcribed to the Counteſs the correſpondence that had ſubſiſted between them, not without hope that ſhe might either gueſs or betray to her to whom ſhe was ſo greatly indebted; but

Lady

Lady Cottiſbrooke declared herſelf totally ignorant, with a degree of ſerioufneſs that could not be queſtioned.

Some regimental orders, received late on Monday night, obliged Captain Courtland to ſet off early the next morning to join his corps on the weſtern road. Conſidering the ſituation of ſuſpenſe in which he left Miſs Lamorne, intereſting to all, and beloved by all, he felt this neceſſity as a mortification, which nothing alleviated but the hope that before he returned, he ſhould be able to ſee Mr. Blyford, on whoſe acquieſcence he with more ſteadineſs than Peregrina's opinion of him had prognoſticated, ſeemed to rely for the future quiet of his mind.

He ſet out, before it was light, and while the ladies were at breakfaſt by themſelves, a ſmart knock at the ſtreet door awakened their attention. Lady Cottiſbrooke was all ear for a meſſage from

Pall

Pall Mall: Peregrina, though the hour, for the time of the year, was early, could not forbear fancying it was the poſt with a letter from Ami Bonange, whoſe laſt billet had taught her to ſuppoſe him ſomewhere in the country. How were they all diſappointed, for even Lady Almerina had learnt to be intereſted, and Lady Eſſex, who could juſt comprehend Peregrina's diſtreſs, was ever ready to ſympathize; how difficult was it to put on civil faces, or for Miſs Lamorne to ſuppreſs the exclamation, "You tireſome creature!" when Sir Edward Bergholt was announced; and as if diſpoſed for a morning's lounge, in ſpite of Hamilton's abſence, trifled with the two young ladies of the family till the tea equipage was removed.

To Peregrina, all viſitors would have appeared intruders; for though her aſſuming cheerfulneſs, or bearing any farther part in the converſation than replying to half a dozen common-place queries, was

was diſpenſed with, ſhe felt as a painful reſtraint the loſs of her privilege to ſigh, and to repeat to Lady Cottiſbrooke, who with unwearied patience liſtened to her, her conjectures, her few hopes, and her many fears.

Sir Edward's humor was ſo various, that it did not particularly ſtrike her attention that he was perfectly coherent, and might with moſt people have paſſed for agreeable company. She had determined to quit the room as ſoon as poſſible, but forgot her reſolution, when the ſervants having retired, and Lady Cottiſbrooke having taken up her work, he very gravely aſked her Ladyſhip if ſhe had heard within a few days of her friends in Devonſhire Place.

" The Haccombes, do you mean ?"

" Yes, have you ſeen them lately ?"

" No,

"No, I ought to call there; but I have not taken any notice of them ſince Miſs Lamorne left them, and I much queſtion whether they have any greater wiſh to ſee me, than I to ſee them."

"Why, true, they did not, I confeſs, *ſhine* there. I believe you may ſpare the trouble of calling."

"Why ſo?"

"Unleſs you and theſe ladies will do *me* the honor of a viſit."

"Dear Edward, do not talk ſuch nonſenſe; think of what you ſay," ſaid Lady Cottiſbrooke, ſtaring.

"Nay, I have thought of nothing elſe; I ſay, if you will come and take a family dinner with me at *my* houſe in Devonſhire Place, I will do the beſt in my power to entertain you; but you know bachelors

are

are not quite *au fait* in ſuch matters.—I ſhall be quite at home on Thurſday."

Peregrina, to whom ſuch rant was intolerable, left the room, and found relief ſhe had never before experienced, in the pert colloquy of Mrs. Sarah Earle, who had ſpent the preceding morning, through the politeneſs of Lady Cottiſbrooke's butler, in a ſight of the Leverian Muſeum, the Panorama, and Mrs. Sylveſter's incomparable wax work, and the evening at Drury Lane theatre, where ſhe had *gazed* at the Wheel of Fortune, and *liſtened* to the pantomimic pageant of Alexander the Great.

She was in the room adjoining to that whither Peregrina had retired, and either unconſcious or uncaring, ſhe was giving to one of the houſe-maids, a full, true, and particular account of what ſhe had ſeen.

The

The duck and her brood; the barn door fowl and its chickens; the *funny* ruffs and reeves, that looked for all the world like ſoldiers; the owl that put her in mind of a judge ſhe had ſeen at the *'ſizes*; and the inferiority of the oſtrich's feathers to thoſe ſhe uſed to wear when at home, were all that ſhe retained of the ornithological part of the muſeum, except, indeed, the humming birds, which, truſting more to her miſconception than her ears, ſhe declared hummed ſo loud that you might hear them over the way. The toads and black beetles diſguſted her, for ſhe poſitively ſaw them crawl—the monkey-room was delightful, it was ſo droll and ſo natural: there was a hat made out of painted feathers that ſhe longed for, ſhe thought that turned up on one ſide with a colored bow, and a *cöplicot* feather, it would be very nice: ſhe ſaw a great ſtone made, ſhe was ſure, out of a peacock's tail, and diamonds, real diamonds! ſuch as are picked out of oyſters, as large as her two fiſts:

ſiſts: there were ſome letters made out of little men, ſome real giants' heads, and a ſtable full of elephants, which her courage would not ſuffer her to look at.

The Panorama did not ſuit her taſte, for having been once frightened on the water, her nerves were affected; but ſhe was really aſtoniſhed how the ſea, for the ſea it was, and the water was ſalt, could come up to Leiceſter Fields: ſhe ſuppoſed it ran at the back of the houſes; —ſhe thought that river had been the Thames—at leaſt ſo ſhe had been told.

But all the diſappointments of theſe exhibitions had been atoned for in the wax-work, which was life itſelf—ſuch noble figures!—ſuch grand dreſſes!—ſuch a quantity of jewels!—Oh, it put her ſo in mind of herſelf when ſhe was young, and uſed to go to Reading aſſembly.

The comedy ſhe did not much reliſh—there was no love in it—not one of the actors made love—no, no, it was not like *Romo* and *Julet*, that was the play to her mind; O, Romo! Romo! and then all about the little ſtars; but here was, ſhe was ſure, ſome ſad miſtake; ſhe could not think it was the right play ſhe had ſeen, for the deuce a bit of a *wheel* was there in it, though it was called the Wheel of Fortune. The pantomime delighted her, ſhe could almoſt have ſworn they were real people, and live horſes, only ſhe knew that a *pantomine* was always acted by *poppets*.

Peregrina had liſtened near half an hour to this oratorical deſcription, which ſeemed to enrapture the houſe-maid, and had almoſt extorted a ſmile from her own unnerved countenance, when ſhe heard a ſtir in the houſe, which made her ſuppoſe Sir Edward was going, and preſently Lady Eſſex came to her, deſiring her to go down,

down, as ſhe was waited for in the drawing-room: her Ladyſhip could give no other account of her meſſage, than that her mother had left the room for ſome minutes with Sir Edward, and on her return had ſent her; and Peregrina, alive to every probability of relief, immediately obeyed the call; but on going where ſhe was directed, found only Sir Edward Bergholt.

He prevented her retreat, by coming forward to meet her, and excuſed his wiſh to ſpeak to her, by her having quitted the room ſo ſuddenly, when he was beginning to relate what he was anxious ſhe ſhould hear. She was ſurpriſed, and not greatly pleaſed; but good manners, and an habitual fear of irritating one whoſe reaſon ſeemed ſo eaſily ſhaken, made her ſit down to liſten.

"I have appeared to you," ſaid he, "ever ſince I had the happineſs of ſeeing

you firſt in Devonſhire Place, under a very ſtrange light; and I ſhould be extremely hurt, were it not in my power to explain my conduct. Suffer me to tell you what has been, and what is my ſituation."

"I can have no intereſt in it, Sir Edward," ſaid ſhe, half frightened; "I have always reſpected and pitied you."

"But you muſt hear me. Do not be alarmed—you will ſee me no more the frantic creature I have been—I may be dull—I may be tedious, but you will contribute to my peace if you will hear me."

"Certainly I will; but may not Lady Cottiſbrooke hear you too?"

"She has heard, and permits me to ſpeak to you."

"Then

"Then I will attend; but I am incapable of all judgment."

"Let me first of all explain to you the circumstances under which I came under Mr. Haccombe's care. My father was an early friend of his, and possessing a heart much too warm for his confined experience to manage, committed himself and his affairs wholly to the guidance of Mr. Haccombe, of whose prudence, knowledge of the world, and thorough integrity, he had an enthusiastic and very ill-founded opinion. He had married when very young, and while entirely dependent on his father, a young woman, who in her situation and connexions was far beneath him: she died, and he went with Mr. Haccombe to the Indies, whence he returned but a few years ago, to take possession of the large property my grandfather's will had bequeathed to him. It was my misfortune, owing, I believe, to a strong resemblance to my mother, whose

memory, though dear, was painful to him, to be diſliked by my father; and it was to a very diſtant relation that I was indebted, in the early part of my life, for a ſchool, and afterwards for an univerſity education. This relation could leave me nothing, but as ſhe died juſt at the time when my father became rich, he ſo far noticed me as to make me a decent allowance, which enabled me to live among my friends.

"About eighteen months ago I loſt my father, and as my conduct had never offended him, I expected to find myſelf my own maſter, and in poſſeſſion of my grand-father's property. Judge then what was my ſurpriſe and indignation, when I found that Mr. Haccombe had made uſe of his unlimited influence over my father, to make him poſtpone the term of my being of age, to my attaining my twenty-fifth year, till which time I was not only to be his ward, but, uſually, reſident in

his

his houſe; and added to this cruel condition, I was, before the concluſion of my twenty-fifth year, to marry, or contract a marriage, and with Mr. Haccombe's conſent, or elſe to forfeit the whole of my patrimony, in truſt to Mr. Haccombe, for charitable uſes. I am convinced that this will was dictated by my guardian; but that it was not quite what he wiſhed to have made it, for it appears evidently to me that he deſigned himſelf as my father's heir, but was fearful of going too far, leſt his villainy ſhould be diſcovered.

" It was my good fortune to have ſome hints given me that put me on my guard. I heard that Haccombe's wealth was not acquired when he left the Indies, but derived in a great meaſure from my father's friendſhip towards him, and I had ſuch proofs of his nefarious conduct, as might for ever have blaſted his character; but dreading the procraſtination of the courts of law, I preferred waiting the eighteen

months of my minority, in which time I did not doubt that Mr. Haccombe would entangle himſelf in his own net, and by ſome overſight, give me ſuch an advantage over him, as would enable me to bring him to *my* terms; but the vexation I endured, preyed on my conſtitution, and brought on a fever, which endangered my life.

"Imagining me ſometimes aſleep, ſometimes delirious, and at laſt beyond all power of attention, Mr. Haccombe and his niece, who had been ſent for in a hurry, on my becoming one of the family, and who was on a ſudden much recommended to my notice, were occaſionally leſs diſcreet than they ſhould have been in their converſation; and I learnt that a match between Mrs. Barnby and myſelf was the grand point aimed at to ſecure my property, and to prevent all retroſpect of accounts.

"I had

" I had every reaſon to believe that my propoſed plan of forbearance would be at laſt the moſt ſucceſsful I could adopt; but there were particular circumſtances that made me abhor the neceſſity I found I ſhould be under of bearing the deteſted *courtſhip* of Mrs. Barnby. I therefore reſolved to act, on my recovery, as if ſtill under a mental derangement, which I thought muſt ſecure me from perſecution, and might give me a better opportunity of obſervation."

" Is it poſſible," interrupted Peregrina, very gravely, " that your eccentricity was feigned? How could you ſupport it as you did? you have really often terrified me."

" I know it," he replied, " and I have been ſorry for it; but as to the poſſibility of ſupporting an eccentric character, it is the eaſieſt thing imaginable, though I confeſs mine was often very ill ſupported;

and much of what you thought eccentricity in me, would now appear to you perfectly to coincide with the ſecret deportment of ſome of the family.

" But this is all beſide the purpoſe; to-morrow Mr. Haccombe's guardianſhip of me ends: the match with Mrs. Barnby has been propoſed to me in form, and I have ſaid, that if poſſible, I will on that day make her my wife. I know this to be impoſſible, for there is an inſuperable impediment on her part, but lately known to me. It will be then in my power to overwhelm Mr. Haccombe with ſhame, and to make it his intereſt to conciliate my friendſhip.

" And now," added Sir Edward, after a long pauſe, which Peregrina, who felt deeply intereſted in his oppreſſion, could not interrupt, even by a word; " forgive me, my deareſt Madam, if I ſay that this flattering proſpect of triumph over villainy,

lainy, and the acquiſition of as large an income as commonly falls to the ſhare of my rank, will loſe all its value; nay, I know not whether it is worth purſuing, unleſs——for I feel too much to have any choice of phraſe—unleſs you conſent to ſhare it with me. Of my own pretenſions I can boaſt little—to your merits—to the angelic qualities of your mind, and to your poſſeſſing, under the moſt trying circumſtances, a heart replete with excellence, mine bears its willing, its moſt honorable teſtimony—I diſtreſs you—I will be ſilent. I do not mean to ſolicit you in the language of paſſion, or the rant of adulation—I only wiſh you to take twenty-four hours to conſider, whether with ſuch a man as *you* have known me, you could be happy."

"Your opinion does me honor, Sir Edward," replied Peregrina, with aſſumed firmneſs; "it is pleaſant to me that you approve my conduct—but to pre-

ſerve your approbation, I muſt be candid—I cannot do as you wiſh me—for—my affections are——engaged."

"Then I ſubmit—but if it is not too great a favor to expect—I promiſe you to importune you no farther—may I but know the object of your choice?"

"You cannot.—It is a friend to whom I am attached by the greateſt obligations."

"Obligation!—that is but a ſlender tie."

"Obligation has improved, I confeſs, into choice; I owe him every thing—I have nothing but my hand and heart to give—for you know I am a very poor girl—he is content with theſe, and they are his.—Queſtion me no farther, I beſeech you."

"I will

" I will not on this point—but in your refuſal, ſo far I intreat you, repreſs or conſole my vanity, as to tell me my hopes were not chimerical."

" If you mean," ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, " to aſk me whether, had I not been engaged, I ſhould have liſtened to you, I will own, for you know I am very honeſt, that independent of the honor your propoſal would have conferred on me, I believe I could have anſwered as you wiſhed me—it was impoſſible, Sir Edward, to ſee as much of you as I have done, without entertaining the higheſt eſteem for you—and I really ſhould have been ſorry to have vexed you."

He roſe in agitation. " The God of Heaven bleſs you," ſaid he—" ſhake hands—let us be ever friends—farewell." And then he bounced out of the room, leaving her in a whirl of ſpirits.

On recollecting what had paſſed, ſhe felt hurt at the neceſſity ſhe was under of adding to the difficulties of a man ſo peculiarly circumſtanced, ſo reſpectable and ſo amiable—but Ami Bonange's intereſts were not ſhaken by her regrets—ſhe wiſhed Sir Edward happy—ſhe did not doubt his meeting with an amiable wife, when he himſelf had ſuch pretenſions.

CHAP. XVIII.

LADY COTTISBROOKE joined her with an inquiring countenance. Peregrina mortified her by ſaying, Sir Edward had, indeed, paid her the higheſt poſſible compliment, but that ſhe did not find herſelf, in her preſent ſtate of uncertainty, at all diſpoſed to accept propoſals of the kind. Her Ladyſhip was beginning to remonſtrate and to argue, when a ſhrill voice was heard on the ſtairs, crying out, "Where is ſhe? where ſhall I find her?" while the ſervants ſeemed endeavoring to ſtop ſome one from aſcending.

Lady Almerina and Lady Eſſex coming out of the adjoining room to inquire the cauſe of the tumult, both the doors were opened

opened at the ſame moment, and from that which led to the ſtairs, entered a woman of a decent appearance, and ſeemingly about forty years of age, who caſting her eyes firſt on Lady Almerina, threw her arms round her, and began to weep in ſpeechleſs agitation; recovering her voice, at laſt, only ſo far as to iterate, "My dear Miſs—my dear, dear young lady!"

All inquiry was in vain. Another noiſe of a different kind was heard again on the ſtairs, and a voice of a deeper tone, in an authoritative manner, called out, "Get a ſedan chair inſtantly."

Peregrina leaving the weeping viſitor, went towards the open door, and met Lord Armathwaite, who in accents of trepidation ſaid, "Come, come inſtantly with me, your mother acknowledges you, and is in agonies till ſhe ſees you."

The

The woman, perceiving to whom it was that Lord Armathwaite addreſſed himſelf, ſuſpended her wailings, quitted Lady Almerina, and ſeiſed in a ſtill more violent agitation on Peregrina, who ſtruggled to get looſe, imagining her a maniac, till the Earl beſpoke her pity, by ſaying this was the perſon who had nurſed her in her infancy, and who, frantic with joy at hearing of her, had run before him to embrace her. Peregrina returned her ardor with acknowledgments, and ſoon prevailed on her to let her ſhare the joy ſhe had occaſioned, and to go immediately to her mother.

The chair was ready, and Peregrina had, in her impetuoſity, ſcarcely articulation ſufficient to beg Lady Cottiſbrooke to follow her. She flew down the ſtairs: Mrs. Lewis, ſtill crying, followed her, while Lord Armathwaite ſtayed only to urge Lady Cottiſbrooke's coming. Claſping her hands with gratitude to Heaven, indulging

dulging her tears for a moment, and then choaking herſelf by their ſuppreſſion, and beating her feet againſt the bottom of the chair through impatience, Peregrina, after a tedious journey, reached the hotel, a ſervant having been ſent to eſcort her.

Nothing but her ignorance of the paſſages prevented her ruſhing forward, as ſoon as ſhe quitted her vehicle: ſhe ſaw none of the gazers; ſhe heard none of their whiſpers; ſhe was conſcious of nothing, till ſhe found herſelf ſtretched upon a bed, on the ſide of which Lady Armathwaite, pale and trembling, was ſitting, with her arm thrown over her, while ſhe one moment preſſed her cheek with her lips, and the next gave way to Mrs. Lewis, who was trying to recover her. Mrs. Halnaby was ſeated in a chair by the bed, Lord Armathwaite at a little diſtance, ſmiled comfort on her as ſhe opened her eyes, and catching her mother's hand, in a faint

a faint voice ſhe ſaid, "Only once, I aſk no more, call me your daughter."

"You are, indeed, my daughter, my moſt dear daughter," replied Lady Armathwaite. "Tell me you forgive my cruel doubts, and then may Heaven ſpare my life to protect you, and atone for what you muſt have ſuffered."

"Indeed, indeed," anſwered Peregrina; "I only *pitied* your doubts, my deareſt mother—but do not agitate yourſelf—conſider we are all happy now—I am very well—I can walk—I can get up."

"Then if you can, do, my love," ſaid Lord Armathwaite; "for thoſe to whom we are indebted for this unſpeakable happineſs, are waiting to ſee you."

She aſked who they were.

She was told that one was Mr. Broome, the clergyman who had married her father and mother.

"But he cannot know *me*," ſaid ſhe. "Pray do not, out of *pity*, ſay I am Elizabeth, if it is not proved to you."

"It is proved," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, "by an old ſervant of your father's, Dennis Geoghegan: he, notwithſtanding Miſs Byram's conſummate effrontery, and ſure no girl ever had ſo much, ſays that he knew her from her birth to be Lady Jemima's child: he has deſcribed you moſt accurately, and he ſays, ſo far is it from being true that you were exchanged, that till the death of Mr. Byram, you never quitted the country houſe: he has explained a moſt ſcandalous ſtory my ſiſter told me, highly to your honour: he ſays all Mr. Byram's ſervants, many of whom he could find, would give the beſt account of you."

"O, I

"O, I know Dennis," ſhe replied, "he was very kind to me when my poor father died. But, my dear mother, pray be comforted—if you cry ſo, I ſhall be ſorry you knew me.—And did *you* nurſe me?" ſaid ſhe, in a hurried voice to Mrs. Lewis.

"I did nurſe you, Miſs," ſhe replied, burſting afreſh into tears; "and it was my careleſsneſs that was the beginning of all this miſchief. Dennis and I were ſweethearts, Miſs, and he uſed to carry you about, and a baſe vile man—he ſtole you from us—a baſe man!"

"Nay, Lewis," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, "do not be ſo violent againſt him, he did it with the beſt intention—he was employed by his maſter, Mr. Byram. But come, my dear daughter, for I claim a ſhare in you—I will go and tell Mr. Broome you are coming."

His

His Lordſhip left the room: ſhe roſe, and cheerfully endeavored to detach her mother's thoughts from the paſt, while ſhe returned the benignant rapture of Mrs. Halnaby by every demonſtration of affection. She looked at herſelf in the glaſs—ſighed at her faded roſes and ſunk eyes; and confeſſing honeſtly her reluctance to give even Mr. Broome an unfavorable impreſſion of her, ſhe delayed a few minutes, till by a little re-adjuſtment of her dreſs, ſhe had compoſed her looks, and called up the ſmiles and the graces that uſed to play round her mouth, and ſport in her eyes.

She then, linking her arm in her mother's, ſhewed herſelf in the adjoining room, where Lord Armathwaite would have preſented her to Mr. Broome, but for the interpoſition of Dennis, who ſtepping forward, and bumping down on his knees, with no trifling noiſe, began to howl

howl and cry, imploring her forgiveneſs, and extolling her beauty and goodneſs.

Not inattentive to the obligation ſhe was under to this humble inſtrument in the hand of Providence, ſhe heard with patience, and returned with acknowledgment the effuſion of his joy and good will. To Mr. Broome ſhe reſpectfully and collectedly addreſſed herſelf, relieving the benevolent agitation that marked his countenance, by expreſſing her gratitude for the ſentiments it indicated.

Broome could ſcarcely reſtrain a ſtill more womaniſh teſtimony to the correctneſs of his own feelings, when he ſaw what a creature it was that he was endeavoring to reſtore to her rights, and who now laying aſide all the ſuperiority her beauty and her importance juſtified, condeſcended in the language of gratitude to own herſelf his debtor. The ſame condeſcenſion from imperial lips would not ſo

have

have delighted him; the ſame words from a plain woman would not have been half ſo valuable.

Little having been ſaid at preſent reſpecting the politics of Byram Park, they would, next after the diſmiſſion of honeſt Dennis to his natural element, have been diſcuſſed; but Peregrina's imagination was occupied by the ſuppoſed miſery of Miſs Byram, who had been kept totally in ignorance of what was paſſing. Lord and Lady Armathwaite relieved her good-natured apprehenſions by a promiſe of lenity. Mrs. Halnaby interpoſed, "Do what you will with her, ſo you get rid of her;" and Miſs was in gentle terms cited to appear.

Underſtanding only that there was company below, and one of the party a gentleman, ſhe, after a little fidgeting at the glaſs, and a ſlight refreſhment of her bloom, made her *entrée* in the uſual *ſub-*

dued

dued finery of her *matutine* habiliments. Peregrina panted with expectation on hearing her footsteps; and prepared, not without affectionate pity, to alleviate, by a kind reception, her mortifying degradation; but disgusted more than ever with her external, which perhaps it was only disuse that shewed in a state of aggravation, she could only extend her hand in silent civility, while her half sister, unable to retreat, though unwilling to stay, surveyed her with looks expressive of fear, doubt, and dislike.

"You know that Lady? Miss Byram," said Lord Armathwaite, setting his eyes full on her countenance.

She had not hoped for the blessing of a question. She availed herself of it, and answered, "No," with a steadiness that might have been applauded, even at the Old Bailey.

" Surely, Miſs Byram," ſaid Peregrina mildly, " you know me!"

" It matters not," ſaid Lord Armathwaite, " the young lady is already a papiſt; and by all that's good, if there is a convent in the world, ſhe ſhall be locked up there; for if ſhe does not know you, ſhe muſt then be Lady Armathwaite's daughter; and ſhe ſhall no longer, while I live, remain here to plague her mother. Had ſhe known you, and honeſtly confeſſed it, no ſeverity, after what you have ſaid for her, would have been thought on."

" Why, you ar'n't going to *thut* me up in a convent, *becauth* I did not know that *Mith Elithabeth*—it *ith tho* long *thinth* I *thaw* her; *thee ith* grown out of knowledge."

" Then," ſaid Lady Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby, both at once, " you *do* now own her to be Elizabeth, your half ſiſter."

" I

"I *thuppothe*," anſwered ſhe, with a malicious ſmile, "you *choothe thee thould* be *tho*; and I am *alwaith*, *ath* they *thay*, for letting *folkth* have their own way: only tell me what I am to be done to; I *thuppothe* I am my own *mithtreth* now, and I *thall* be heartily glad of it; for I am quite tired of being a *thlave*."

Lord Armathwaite turned from her in ſilent contempt. Peregrina would have endeavoured to ſoften the ferocity of her ſpirit; but ſhe was called to more important matters; and Miſs was ſent out with Mrs. Lewis, for an airing. Lady Cottiſbrooke came to ſhare the general joy, juſt when Mr. Broome was beginning a ſtatement of the impending events at Byram Park; and every one agreed in his opinion, that an immediate developement towards Sir Clifford ſhould take place.

For this purpoſe he propoſed returning home without delay: he knew by the let-

ter he had that morning received from his curate, that the compliment Sir Clifford's ſtrict adherence to his light promiſe reſerved for him, muſt procure him admiſſion; and it was his reſolution, at all events, to make uſe of it for the puniſhment of the wicked, and the vindication of the oppreſſed.

But as he owed no ſmall grudge to the inſolence of Mr. Laſſiter, and the contemptuous craft of Lady Jemima, he wiſhed much to ſurprize at the moment when he overwhelmed them; and for this innocent revenge he did not doubt, when once he had gained Sir Clifford's ear, he ſhould obtain his ſanction.

Unable to reſt while his plan remained uncompleted, he and Dennis ſet off before three o'clock for Northamptonſhire; it was his intention to procure an immediate audience of Sir Clifford, to ſend the reſult back to London by Dennis; on the receipt

receipt of which, if it proved, as could ſcarcely be doubted, favourable, the whole of the party were to follow; they would then be in the neighbourhood of the park, at lateſt on the Friday evening, and in admirable time for paying early congratulations to the bridal train.

How Mr. Broome became acquainted with the circumſtances previouſly neceſſary to his introduction to Lord Armathwaite, not having been mentioned, Peregrina was left to her own conjectures, and they fixed on Ami Bonange, with whoſe beneficence, though ſtill averſe to diſcloſing her own ſentiments, ſhe wiſhed her mother to be acquainted. She therefore gave his hiſtory, not without hope of ſome light on the ſubject; but, like Lady Cottiſbrooke, her friends could only declare his guardianſhip "paſſing ſtrange," and the object of it very fortunate in meeting with ſo good a friend. Peregrina expreſſed her hope, that when her affairs were a little more ſettled,

he would avow himſelf, and receive her thanks.

"There is no doubt of it," ſaid Lord Armathwaite; "for as his guardianſhip muſt now end, it is not to be imagined, that for the ſake of keeping an unimportant ſecret, he ſhould renounce your friendſhip."

"Well," ſaid Mrs. Halnaby, "my dear Miſs Lamorne, (for I muſt pleaſe myſelf with recollecting you are ſuch), I only beg, that when the gentleman unveils you will prepare yourſelf for what I am ſure he will turn out—an elderly parſon, in a great wig."

Peregrina ſmiled; and Lady Armathwaite, with a ſigh, anſwered, "whoever he is, and whatever he is, I ſhall ever bleſs him for his goodneſs to my girl."

"And I ſhall love him," ſaid Peregrina, "even if he is an elderly parſon with a great

great wig; for assisting to restore me to my mother."

"I grudge," said Lord Armathwaite, "to leave so pleasant a party; happiness is so new to us, that I am greedy of it: but I am indispensably engaged, and you must excuse me till the evening."

He then went away; and the ladies were left to interesting details, and satisfactory explanations. At Peregrina's request, Lady Almerina and Lady Effex were invited to spend the remainder of the day with them; and though the minds of the principal characters were still turbulent, all were happy.

In the evening Lady Cottisbrooke received a note from Sir Edward Bergholt, earnestly requesting her to use her influence with Miss Lamorne, and the party he understood her to be with, to grace his festive triumph the next evening, by being

preſent at Mr. Haccombe's. Lady Cottiſbrooke and her family had already promiſed; Lady Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby did not object, but rather promoted his wiſh, having heard how he was ſituated; and Peregrina, much againſt her inclination, was obliged to acquieſce.

Before ſupper, Lady Cottiſbrooke, with her young ladies, went home, having engaged the whole party to dine with her the next day. Soon after her retreat, Lord Armathwaite returned; they ſupped, and he then, with a grave aſpect, addreſſing himſelf to his new ſtep-daughter, talked to her on a variety of ſubjects reſpecting her preſent ſituation and future proſpects. He endeavoured to fortify her mind againſt the not improbable obduracy of her prejudiced grand-father: he aſſured her moſt affectionately, that he would ever conſider her as his own child; and he found no difficulty in reconciling to whatever might be her fate, one, whoſe happineſs depended

depended ſolely on the being recogniſed by an affectionate parent, and the fidelity of a moſt diſintereſted friend.

The Earl, ſtill grave, now offered to her conſideration an affair of a very different and moſt unexpected nature. He named Sir Edward Bergholt as a gentleman of his acquaintance, and with whom he had juſt dined, and ſpent ſome hours in converſation. He ſaid, that the notoriety of what had paſſed in the hotel, had occaſioned his mentioning Miſs Lamorne as well known to him; and he had gone ſo far as to avow his ſentiments of her, and to repeat the ſubſtance of their converſation at Lady Cottiſbrooke's that morning. He appeared to have ſtated even her refuſal, but to have ſuppreſſed her reaſon for it; and Peregrina was extremely hurt when Lord Armathwaite declared himſelf his advocate, and begged her to reconſider his propoſal.

She was diſtreſſed almoſt to tears, and replied only, " that it was out of her power."

Mrs. Halnaby ſaid, " that ſhe knew and admired Sir Edward, and thought he ſhould not be rejected on ſlight grounds."

" Have I," ſaid Peregrina mournfully, " only found my friends to find them arbitrary? Am I ſufficiently known to be duly judged of? I am ſure my dear mother will not permit this."

" My deareſt girl," ſaid Lady Armathwaite, " I have no ſpirits to conteſt the point; I can only ſay, that had Miſs Byram been amiable, and you not diſcovered, Sir Edward Bergholt is the huſband I ſhould have ſought for her; and that my heart is ſet on your being his wife. My happineſs will be incomplete without it."

" I would ſacrifice my *life* for your peace, my deareſt mother," ſhe replied, with

with emotion; "but my *integrity* I cannot; nor would you, I am confident, permit it. I have told you very honeſtly how I have been, and am indebted to my unknown friend: but I confeſs myſelf wrong in having concealed from you that his letters of late have ſo far influenced my mind, as to make me wiſh, ſhould he be found the unexceptionable man I believe him, to dedicate the reſt of my life to his happineſs. I will ſhew you his letters to-morrow; but Sir Edward ought to have told this, for I told it to him, though without naming Ami Bonange."

"I approve of your idea," ſaid Lord Armathwaite; "and have only to excuſe my precipitancy."

"Obliged as you are, my love," ſaid her mother, "I cannot blame you—I give up, and will be content."

"I only hope, ſaid Mrs. Halnaby, he may not be elderly or greatly wigged. As

to his being a parſon, we will forgive him."

Peregrina, who had expected much more oppoſition, was very grateful for the lenity ſhe had experienced, and felt her mind diſcharged of a grievous burthen, now ſhe had diſcloſed this grand ſecret of her boſom. Having paid a kind viſit to the impriſoned Miſs Byram, and found her ſtill Miſs Byram in nature as well as name, ſhe waited Lewis's diſmiſſion from the other ladies, to interrogate her on a thouſand points; and, learning, after a variety of diſcourſe, that the ſudden meeting of the two domeſtics had renewed their former attachment, ſhe took on herſelf the accompliſhment of their wiſhes; and pleaſing herſelf with the hope, that happy herſelf, ſhe might now make others happy, ſhe gratefully and piouſly recommended herſelf to Heaven; and, worn out with joy, reſigned herſelf to ſleep.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

AWAKING the next morning to the delightful recollection that ſhe had recovered her parent, and was ſurrounded by her friends, ſhe felt no longer the orphan ſenſations that had obſtructed hitherto her purſuits of peace; and with ecſtacy ſhe fancied, when preſiding in high glee at the ſocial breakfaſt table, that ſhe ſaw returning health in the faintly-animated countenance of Lady Armathwaite.

The morning was ſoon paſſed in repetitions and felicitations; and as Peregrina was to dreſs at Lady Cottiſbrooke's, the ladies went there at an early hour, leaving Lord Armathwaite to follow them.

On

On entering the houſe, a billet was put into her hand; and her impatience to open it ſcarcely allowed of her attending her mother and friend to the drawing-room.—There, retired to a window, ſhe broke the ſeal and read:

"I have delayed no longer than was abſolutely neceſſary the revelation I promiſed; but, my Peregrina, what are my ſenſations at this moment? You may diſlike, you may reject me! I muſt, however riſque it. If, at nine o'clock this evening, wherever you are, (for that is not important to ſuch beings as myſelf) you will ſignify to my ſpirit, by winding your watch, that you wiſh to ſee me, I will appear, and avow myſelf,

"Your moſt devoted

"AMI BONANGE."

There being now no reaſon for concealment, except from the young ladies who were

were not preſent, Peregrina read the billet aloud; and though ſhe was ſomewhat ſtartled at the ſupernatural ſtyle it was written in, her curioſity predominated, and ſhe waited with impatience the hour of revelation, overlooking the diſagreeable duty of civility ſhe had previouſly to diſcharge at Mr. Haccombe's, where, notwithſtanding Sir Edward's aſſurances to Lady Cottiſbrooke, that the company of the whole party would be eſteemed a compliment, ſhe could not forbear fearing ſhe muſt be an intruder, or at leaſt a very unacceptable viſiter. Neither had her good opinion of Sir Edward Bergholt's candour or ſanity ſo far improved in the laſt four and twenty hours, as to increaſe her willingneſs to humour him. However, her mother would be with her, and ſhe determined to feel bold.

Lady Armathwaite, expreſſing a great deſire to ſee Mrs. Earle, ſhe was ſought for, and found locked up in a garret, whither,

ther, in hopes of eſcaping notice, ſhe had retreated on hearing of the arrival of her former friend, *Joan.* Till aſſured by Peregrina herſelf, that ſhe not only would not be hurt, but ſhould be rewarded, ſhe would not quit her faſtneſs; but at length ſhe was coaxed out; and, with a ſet of inconſiſtent airs of aſſumed ſaucineſs and heartfelt humiliation, ſhe followed Miſs Lamorne to a room, where ſhe knew Lady Armathwaite was waiting alone.

The benignity, the forgiving condeſcenſion, the cordiality of Joanna, would have re-aſſured her ſubdued enemy, had ſhe poſſeſſed a heart to appeal to; but ſhe had ever been ſelfiſh, and therefore could never appreciate the ſentiments of others correctly; for ſhe judged by that falſe ſtandard, her own feelings. She had expected reproach and contumely; and, though ſhe met them not, ſhe could not but think they muſt come. She could put no other conſtruction on the ſoftneſs of Joanna's manner,

ner, than that ſhe ſtill was afraid of her, and confeſſed her original ſuperiority: ſhe heard no forgiveneſs in her voice; ſhe ſaw not the milk of human kindneſs on her lips; ſhe could not ſuppoſe that any one could gratuitouſly forgive a vanquiſhed enemy—ſtill harder was it to believe they could wiſh it: ſhe knew not, for ſhe felt not, how conſonant to the uncorrupted ſtructure of the human heart, are the amiable precepts of the goſpel.

Had Joanna been of another temper; had ſhe too keenly felt, and unguardedly expreſſed her ſenſe of former injuries, Sarah's tongue was ready to defend, and to retort: attacked only by the gentle weapons of tender remembrance and obliterated reſentment, ſhe had no defence or reply; but, recalled from her ſtupor, by the donation of five guineas, and rouſed to recollection by Lady Armathwaite's aſſuring her, that, as the daughter of her guardian, ſhe ſhould be immediately exempted from

the

the neceſſity of ſervitude, ſhe quitted the room with a reviving conſciouſneſs of her own importance, and went down to the houſekeeper to remark how much Joanna Doveridge was altered by being a lady, from what ſhe remembered her when ſhe wore a ſtuff gown, and an apron made out of a printed one; and to conſole herſelf that people of family were always noticed by *their relations*, even if they had not had good luck in the world, provided they did not *demean* themſelves.

Peregrina, who forbore calling Mrs. Earle to her aid, out of delicacy to her feelings, dreſt, with the aſſiſtance of another ſervant, and returning, as quickly as poſſible, to the drawing-room, entered it at the ſame time with Lord Armathwaite. She produced to him her billet from Ami Bonange, and conſulted him on the poſſibility of getting away from Mr. Haccombe's in time. He ſatisfied her by ſaying he would take it on himſelf, and laughed at her

her apprehenſions of ſome deception or alarm that ſhould agree with the ſupernatural ſtyle of the note.

The carriages came at half paſt ſeven to take them to Devonſhire Place; and Peregrina, ſtill more diſguſted with her errand, and more inclined to think ſhe might meet with ſome affront, reluctantly found herſelf at the houſe that had afforded her pleaſures ſo deluſive: her fears, if not her painful recollections, vaniſhed on entering the drawing-room, which was illuminated in the grandeſt ſtyle; and where Mr. Haccombe, Mrs. Barnby, in white ſattin and immaculate plumes; and Sir Edward Bergholt, in his never-abandoned black, received them as moſt welcome gueſts.

Mr. Haccombe paid his adorations to *Miſs Byram* on her happy change of ſituation, and begged her particular introduction to her friends. Mrs. Barnby ſmothered her with kindneſſes, telling her, that

that nothing was ever ſo infamous as Mrs. Haccombe's conduct of late; that Mr. Haccombe had entirely diſcarded her, and deſigned to ſue for a divorce; and that things were now quite on a different footing from what ſhe had known them.

Tea and coffee were handed round, and Peregrina waited the arrival of other company, but none appeared; and ſhe began to fear they were invited to a yawning party that muſt aggravate her impatience, Mr. Haccombe paying little attention to any body but herſelf; and Mrs. Barnby entertaining her gueſts only with intimations, which in good manners nobody could underſtand, that ſhe was yet in an *unſettled* ſtate.

Sir Edward ſent his man down ſtairs for a bundle of papers, and then, beſpeaking particularly the attention of Mr. Haccombe, he began:

" I am

"I am now, Sir, having attained the preſcribed period of my minority, to return you thanks for whatever care you have exerciſed towards me or my property."

"Sir, I deſire no thanks."

"I am, as I underſtand from the tenor of my father's will, in the courſe of the enſuing year, to chuſe a lady, and with your conſent to marry her; I, therefore, wiſh to know on whom I am to caſt my eyes."

"Can you aſk? Sir Edward," interrupted Mrs. Barnby, burſting into a fit of dry ſobbing, and leaning on the end of a ſofa, with her handkerchief at her eyes.

"I certainly ought to aſk, Madam," replied Sir Edward, "ſince ſtill without Mr. Haccombe's conſent, I muſt not marry; and I have not my option of a ſtate of celibacy. I, therefore, aſk Mr. Haccombe again, What lady am I to chuſe?"

" I do not wiſh—I, I do not mean—I would not," he replied, faultering and heſitating, " direct your choice in ſo important a matter; but, from what has paſſed between you, I ſhould think that—my niece."

" Your niece!" repeated Sir Edward; " I knew of none you had—who is ſhe? where is ſhe?"

He waved his hand towards Mrs. Barnby.

" *Is* that your niece?"

Peregrina now fancied Sir Edward really inſane; but Mr. Haccombe's changing countenance was his beſt vindication. He replied, " I *acknowledge* her as ſuch."

" But, Sir, you cannot *aſſert* her to be ſuch."

" Sir,

" Sir, do you dare diſpute it?—what ground have you?"

" To your firſt queſtion I anſwer, that I dare diſpute it with you or any man—to your ſecond, that my ground is the having overheard a quarrel between your virtuous wife, and your ſtill more virtuous *niece*; in which they ſpared not even their own reputations; for they thought me mad, and treated me like an ideot. But I wave the objection as to her relationſhip; it is of no conſequence—you mean, I ſuppoſe, that lady."

" Certainly I do."

" Then, I demand to know her name."

" Lucy Barnby," the lady vehemently replied for herſelf, in violent commotion.

" I know no ſuch perſon," ſaid Sir Edward; " I know, indeed, *Molly Minns*; for by

by the firſt, I underſtand, Madam, you were chriſtened, and the laſt you acquired by marriage, about two years before you came under the protection of this gentleman, Mr. Haccombe. You were then, I think, not quite thirty years of age."

Mrs. Barnby would have left the room, but Sir Edward oppoſing her, Mr. Haccombe's courage roſe, and he demanded his authority for this new calumny.

"You ſhall have it," ſaid he, temperately, at the ſame time ringing the bell. He whiſpered his ſervant, who preſently returned with a very rough-looking elderly man, ſeemingly of the *aquatic* tribe.

Mrs. Barnby on his entrance ſcreamed "O, 'tis Jack Minns!" and burſt into a flood of tears, which Jack not regarding, after a few aſtounding queſtions from Sir Edward, he took his Moll in tow, threatening her loudly with the cat-

of-

of-nine-tails; and, without any mercy to her ſattin, or her plumage, dragged her off, proteſting that ſhe was fine enough even for Bermondſey Spa, or the St. Helena tea gardens.

"I am now, I preſume, then," ſaid Sir Edward, "at liberty, Mr. Haccombe, to marry where *I* chuſe."

"O yes, yes, undoubtedly—you have my full conſent," he replied, trying to get off.

"No, ſtay, Sir," ſaid Sir Edward, "you and I have ſtill an account to ſettle—you know how you have wronged *me:* but that is nothing compared to the repeated injuries you have planned againſt, and offered to this lady, while you thought her defenceleſs and unprovided for. I inſiſt on your making her every reparation."

"I will, I will," he replied, pale and trembling, dropping on his knees; "I will aſk her pardon—I will marry her, as ſoon as I am divorced."

"Marry her, indeed!" ſaid Sir Edward; "profane her not by the idea—intreat her pardon".

"You have it, I aſſure you, Sir," ſaid Peregrina, wiſhing to end the ſcene.

The fallen emperor of the eaſt ſtood again on his feet; and, ſupporting his ſhaking frame by leaning on a table, ſeemed to await his doom.

"I will not," ſaid Sir Edward, "trouble theſe friends with accounts; I only tell you, that theſe papers contain a full crimination of your conduct; your infamous letter written to blaſt the character of Miſs Lamorne, and to get her into your power; which, an accident that you ought to have

provided againſt, the integrity of an honeſt man, put into my hands; and here I have every proof of your monied villainy. Confeſs you have wronged me, and prove yourſelf for once not a liar."

"I do confeſs," he replied; "I own I have now nothing but what is your's; for my wife has been ſadly expenſive. I have not all your property to produce, part of it is gone; but what remains I will make over to you, only let me go to the Indies again."

"Remain, then, a priſoner in your houſe," ſaid Sir Edward, "till I am more at leiſure."

A pauſe now enſuing, and Mr. Haccombe having retired into an adjoining room, where Sir Edward's man attended him to keep off the horrors, Peregrina conſidered the curtain as dropped; and perceiving that it was within a quarter of

nine o'clock, ſhe begged Lady Armathwaite to be going. They waited only the concluſion of a ſeemingly tedious explanation Sir Edward was giving the Earl and the liſtening ladies, reſpecting his diſcoveries in his character of a maniac; and Peregrina ſtanding near the fire, with her watch in her hand, and fidgetting to be gone, ſaw, to her inexpreſſible vexation, the minute-hand complete its revolution. She begged Lord Armathwaite to go, or to ſuffer her mother to go with her. He ſaid only, "your watch is too faſt, I ſhall be ready in five minutes;" and ſhe turned from him not much pleaſed with his negligence.

Recollecting the injunction of the billet, though almoſt too much out of humour to mind it, ſhe wound her watch; and was glad to perceive the company by that time ſeparating. Sir Edward went into the next room, and ſhe earneſtly begged they might not wait his return, as the incivility was to be

be excuſed under ſuch circumſtances; but Lord Armathwaite ſeemed to dread a rude action more than an unkind one.

She was beginning to think of retreating ſecretly with Lady Almerina, whom ſhe knew ſhe could perſuade; for ſtill ſhe had no idea of ſeeing her friend any where but in Pall Mall, when the farther door was thrown open, and *Mr. Bonange* was announced.

CHAP. XX.

Mr. Broome and Dennis performed their journey without interruption; but, reaching their deſtination at an hour when a viſit to Sir Clifford could not be thought on, they retired to reſt; and about ten the next morning, Broome, whoſe anxiety had not ſuffered him to cloſe his eyes, proceeded to the park, where, receiving a good account of the Baronet's health, but with it a civil and unwilling refuſal to his requeſt of admiſſion, he firmly told the porter, that he knew it was not his maſter's wiſh, though it might be Lady Jemima's order, that he ſhould be denied: that he had been written to in London to haſten his return on buſineſs for Sir Clifford; and that, as a friend, he could aſſure him, he would be much

much more in danger of forfeiting his place by his obſtinacy, than by his compliance.

This Cerberus not being by nature a growler, Mr. Broome prevailed on him, and going through the hall, he croſſed on Arabella, who, in ecſtacies at the ſight of one ſo neceſſary to her happineſs, aſſured him *grand'pa* was much better, and wanted very much to ſee him. She even took the trouble of introducing him; and the parſon trembling like an aſpin leaf, found himſelf, without let or moleſtation, in the apartment to which Sir Clifford had removed from his bed-chamber.

The Baronet received him with frankneſs and cordiality, perhaps improved by the remembrance of the danger he had been in of a final ſeparation from all his worldly connections: he ſtretched out his hand, and kindly reproached him with abſenting himſelf, while Broome, ſtrangled

by his feelings, could indicate his rationality only by the tears that ſtarted in his eyes.

Sir Clifford began with, "Where have you been?" He replied, "In London, on buſineſs."

"Aye," ſaid Sir Clifford, jocoſely, "I fancy you have ſome great buſineſs in hand. I ſhall not be ſurpriſed if we ſoon ſee a fine London lady at the vicarage; but firſt, my good friend, before I part from you again, you muſt clear my conſcience of its promiſe to you, and tack my grand-daughter and this impatient ſtripling of a Marquis together. Mercy on us, they call that thread-paper of a figure a grown-up man! They were not ſuch *men* when I was young, Mr. Broome.—No, indeed! we were ſtouter fellows.—Why, what's the matter with you? Am I rallying unreaſonably?—Forgive me," added the old man, half riſing in his chair;

"I fear

" I fear you have been on ſome ſad buſineſs—forgive me, for I would not for the world knowingly wound your's, or any body's feelings."

" My dear Sir," replied Broome, blowing his noſe violently; " I am ſenſible of your goodneſs—my ſpirits are ſo agitated I can ſcarcely ſpeak—but I am not unhappy.—I depend wholly on your diſpoſition to hear candidly and patiently what I come on purpoſe to ſay."

" You may depend on me—but you alarm me."

" I ſhall, I fear, alarm, and perhaps diſtreſs you; but it is only to render you one of the happieſt beings in the world."

" In *this* world, do you mean?"

" Yes—for I will put it in your power to be juſt and kind, and then I know you

will be happy.—Prepare yourſelf, my dear Sir, to hear ſtrange things."

" I am all attention."

" You tell me, Sir Clifford, I am to have the honor of uniting the Marquis and your grand-daughter.—You will be ſurpriſed if I ſay it is out of my power."

" Why, you ungrateful—"

" Stay—you ſaid you would be patient. I mean no ſlight—the lady is already married."

" Married! it is impoſſible."

" She *is* married—married to Charles Grubb, your footman."

" What proof have you of this? Be careful, Mr. Broome."

" Here

" Here is a copy of the regiſter.—Nay, ſend, yourſelf, to the next pariſh, and you will find, though I believe Willes knows nothing of it; his ſcoundrel of a curate, Franklin, married them, according to this date."

" You aſtoniſh me.—What is to become of me? Does Lady Jemima know it?"

" I ſuſpect ſhe does—but it is of little importance."

" But what am I to do? Will you ſee the Duke for me?"

" I will do any thing to ſerve you—but ——"

" How ſhall I ever get the better of this diſgrace? O, how fooliſhly—how ideot-like I centered all my happineſs in this deceitful Elizabeth!"

 " Stay,

" Stay, Sir—call her not deceitful Elizabeth—ſhe is, I agree with you, *deceitful*; but I deny that ſhe is Elizabeth—*her* name is *Arabella* Grubb."

" Pſhaw—hold your tongue, Broome, you are harping on the old ſtring. If you have no better authority for your other aſſertion than for this, you muſt excuſe me if I pay no regard to either."

" I aſk you only to hear me, Sir, and then if you do not think as I do, I will marry the Marquis and your grand-daughter whenever you command it."

Broome then proceeded with a circumcumſtantial detail of facts, frequently pauſing to give Sir Clifford time to recover from the extreme agitation of tottering belief, and ſtill fond partiality. Incredulity itſelf could not have oppoſed his proof; and poor Sir Clifford was forced to own he had very bad people about him,

him; for Lady Jemima, he was aware, muſt have been privy to the deceit.

Laſſiter having got intelligence of Broome's return, had poſted to the Park in hopes of *ouſting* him; but to his mortification, Sir Clifford excuſed himſelf from receiving his viſit, and Broome was not interrupted before he had painted to the old gentleman's reviving imagination, the excellencies of his real grand-daughter, and the reſpectability of thoſe ſhe was connected with. Sir Clifford begged earneſtly that ſhe and her friends might be inſtantly ſent for, by an expreſs. "O, haſten them, haſten them!" he cried; "at my age, and with my infirmities, I may be dead before they come."

Broome delayed no longer than to plan with Sir Clifford the private introduction of the party to him the next day but one, when, fortunately, the bride-elect and her friends, including Laſſiter, were to dine

dine with the Duke in form. It was agreed that nothing ſhould be divulged till Saturday morning, when juſt before the time of ſetting forward for church, where Sir Clifford inſiſted on having the ceremony performed, it was propoſed to treat the company with a new ſpecies of electrical ſhock, to conclude with Mr. Laſſiter's production of the will he had made, and his conſequent diſmiſſion from all credit. Broome then went home to ſend off Dennis; and Sir Clifford betook himſelf to meditation, Laſſiter fearing, but no one ſuſpecting the purpoſe of this extraordinary viſit.

CHAP. XXX.

PEREGRINA's eyes, fixed on the door, waited in ſtaring eagerneſs the entrance of the perſon announced; but her heart inſtantly ſickened at the importance of what ſhe had ſo earneſtly longed for. She had, as we all do in ignorance, framed to herſelf an idea, of the correctneſs of which ſhe was now to judge; but what were her feelings, when inſtead of the ſtranger ſhe had expected, the *incognito* friend ſhe had ſo wiſhed to know, ſhe ſaw only Sir Edward Bergholt, from whom ſhe would have turned away diſguſted and diſappointed, had not the circumſtance of his being new-dreſſed, ſtruck her as a ſingularity.

With-

Without being ſenſible of changing her place, ſhe had got cloſe to her mother, and had linked her arm within her's, as if fearing ſome magical deception. Sir Edward's countenance indicated more than his return to the buſineſs he had quitted: he ſaw her amazement, and coming up to her, he ſaid with only an expreſſive ſmile, "Am I punctual?"

"Good God," ſhe replied, "Sir Edward, what can you mean?—Surely——"

"Yes, ſurely," he replied, "you ſee in me your obſcure friend, Ami Bonange, who has loved you, watched you, and endeavored to protect you, from the firſt hour of his acquaintance with you."

In ſilence, and ſcarcely conſcious of her own thoughts, ſhe turned to Lady Armathwaite, and ſunk on her ſhoulder.

The Earl removed her to a ſeat, whither Sir Edward followed her, and when the encouragement of her friends, who ſeemed perfectly in the ſecret, had a little revived her, Sir Edward ſcarcely knowing how to conſtrue her emotion, gently reminded her that he had now performed his promiſe, and offered to retreat for ever.

" How can you be ſo cruel?" ſhe replied, in a languid voice; " will you not allow me time to connect two ideas that have till now ever been ſeparate in my mind? How can I in a moment transfer the gratitude and affection due to Ami Bonange to Sir Edward, to whom I have ignorantly refuſed to liſten. I ſhould hate myſelf, could I for a moment heſitate in my conduct to ſo good a friend; and I am ſure in a very little time I ſhall feel very glad that I can avoid adding to Sir Edward's vexations and ill treatment. Only let

let me go home now, and I will ſee you as early as you pleaſe to-morrow."

Her friends indulged her: in her way to Pall Mall ſhe grew more compoſed, and was retiring to her chamber, without entering the drawing-room, when ſhe was called back to hear of Dennis's arrival, and to ſee the very favorable account he had brought from Sir Clifford.

Sir Edward having appointed nine in the morning for being in Pall Mall; the coach and a poſt-chaiſe were ordered for eleven, when it was arranged that Lord and Lady Armathwaite, Mrs. Halnaby, and Peregrina ſhould go in the former; Miſs Byram, Mrs. Lewis, and Sarah Earle, in the latter.

After this adjuſtment, Peregrina, haraſſed by the rapidity of the day's events, retired to reſt; but to reſt was impoſſible: ſhe could think only of Sir Edward, and, though fatigued even when ſhe roſe, ſhe could

could think without reluctance of their expected interview.

She received him alone, and her heart, which pure integrity guided, had no diſpoſition to exerciſe the uſual privileges of tyrant beauty. She regretted only, that her jealouſy of the rights of ideal Ami Bonange made her appear for the firſt moment indifferent to his embodied repreſentative; but for this he was inclined to make every poſſible allowance, as well as to convert into a compliment the ſteadineſs of her firſt idea.

Mrs. Sarah Earle having been ſent for early in the morning, the party ſet off for Northampton; from whence to Byram Park there was a diſtance of only four miles, Sir Edward reluctantly remaining in town to ſettle his affairs with Mr. Haccombe, who perſiſted in his intention of going again to the Indies.

Broome met his friends at Northamp-

ton,

ton, and confirmed and amplified the communications of his letter. Two o'clock the next day was the time named for the interview with Sir Clifford; Lord and Lady Armathwaite, with ſenſations of a mixed kind, and Peregrina, with a throbbing heart, prepared to meet the calumniated, the pitied, the reſpected old man, who with more ſteadineſs than was expected, and with the ſincereſt repentance for errors, imputable in a great meaſure to the miſguided goodneſs of his heart, welcomed his friends, embraced his ſon's injured relict, and bleſſed his lovely offſpring. They remained with him till the return of the family was expected, and it was then propoſed, in order to give greater force to the ſhock of the morning, to impoſe ſilence on the ſervants, who might be depended on, as Mr. Charles Grubb was on duty with his miſtreſs, had not Mrs. Brown been an unfortunate obſtacle; how to ſtill her tongue it was difficult to tell, till Broome, whoſe anxiety for the complete overthrow made him ingenious, thought

of

of taking her back to Northampton with them, there to remain in ſafety till the next morning.

She was called to hear the decree, for which Sir Clifford's requeſt was to be the only reaſon given; but on entering the room, ſhe diſcovered a diſpoſition far from inimical to the new gueſts.

"I have no *dejection*, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "to going wherever you pleaſe; but you need not fear me: I knew ſomething was in the wind, and I knew my young lady the moment I ſee her come up the ſteps, and my Lord, too, I have ſeen before; but as to what is going forward, to be ſure it is none of my buſineſs, but I ſee ſome folks will now have their deſerts, and ſome folks will have their rights; and I am heartily glad of it, for I have not been well uſed among 'em—that's what I know. I ſhall be very glad to be out of the meſs, and if I can lend a helping hand,

hand, God knows, I ſhall be glad to do it—for I have no patience—here's my ſiſter-in-law, domineering over me, juſt as if I knew nothing of what's what."

"Your ſiſter-in-law," ſaid Sir Clifford, "pray whom do you mean?"

"Why, Lady Jemima, Sir," ſhe replied. "Perhaps you did not know that I had ſuch great relations; but ſhe is my ſiſter-in-law, as ſure as God's in Heaven; and as ſure as Miſs Arabella is Mrs. Grubb; and as ſure as that old dog, Laſſiter, has made himſelf your heir; and as ſure as Miſs Elizabeth wrote to you, Sir, which you never could have knowed; and as ſure as——"

"For Heaven's ſake ſtop," cried Lord Armathwaite, half diſtracted with her velocity of communication; "a little at a time, and we ſhall underſtand better."

She

She then being diſtinctly interrogated, ſet forth the whole of her knowledge, to the amazement of her hearers. It was not perfectly clear whether ſhe meant to adhere to her friends *in the long-boat*, or only to ſave herſelf from *the ſinking veſſel*; but ſhe ſeemed thoroughly repentant, and evinced her ſincerity, as far as was poſſible, by offering to leave her place, and by preferring the removing for the night to Northampton, that ſhe might not be interrogated by her former colleagues.

Sir Clifford reluctantly ſuffered his new-found relations to quit him: he ſhed tears at their departure, and obtained their promiſe to be at the Park, accompanied by the elder Miſs Byram, and his old favorite, Mrs. Halnaby, at ten the next morning.

The ſervants at Sir Clifford's bearing no good will to Lady Jemima and her daughter, preſerved the ſilence enjoined; and

not

not being acquainted with what was paſſing, began the preparations ordered for the wedding. The ladies, whom their deluded patron avoided ſeeing on their return home, by going to bed, roſe early to decorate; and mama, more as a bride than a mother; and the bride, more like an eaſtern princeſs than a *midland country* belle, had approved each other, when they were informed that the Duke and Marquis were come, and requeſted their company.

Lady Jemima remained undaunted, but Arabella began to feel a little faint-hearted, now that the hour of complete deception was ſo near. She, however, prudently ſuſpended her cogitations; and, as the perſon of moſt importance, ſwam firſt into the room, where, to her infinite ſurpriſe, ſhe found *grand' pa* had got a large company. Turning about to Lady Jemima, who was

cloſe at her heels, ſhe whiſpered, "Who can all theſe people be?"

"Go forward," anſwered Mama, who could ſee nothing over Miſs's ſhoulders.

The Marquis approached to meet his bride; a pauſe of a few ſeconds enſued, which gave the laſt-entered ladies ſufficient time to recogniſe Lord Armathwaite, Miſs Byram, and Peregrina, the only perſons of the party, excepting Broome, that they were perſonally acquainted with. The Marquis's flouriſhes could not attract the attention of Arabella; the Duke's compliments were loſt on her mother. At length Lady Jemima, as if fancying a freak of good breeding would be the moſt uſeful extrication, pretended juſt to recollect her brother, and with polite exclamation, feigned great delight at their unexpected meeting.

His lordſhip was ſtiff and ſilent. Miſs Arabella, juſt then come to her ſenſes, ſkipped up to her ſiſter, who like a monkey watching the next command of his keeper, could only ſtare in reply. She would next have noticed the agitated Peregrina, had not Mr. Laſſiter juſt then ſneaked in, and Sir Clifford made a ſign to Mr. Broome, who roſe from his ſeat and ſaid:

"When I take on myſelf the function of a ſpeaker, I wiſh to be underſtood only as the repreſentative of Sir Clifford Byram, and acting under his direction; but when I aſſert the rights of innocence againſt the uſurpations of guilt, I would be believed to ſpeak my own ſentiments, and to act under my own ſuggeſtion: for all the injury I may appear to deſign or offer, *I* only am reſponſible; for the integrity of my views I take Heaven to witneſs."

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He then, in a manly and conciſe ſtatement, detailed and ſummed up the iniquity by which the partiality of Sir Clifford had been gained, while the Duke in a rage called upon the coroneted *manes* of his anceſtors, their ſtrawberry leaves and garters, to riſe in vindication of his injured honors; Lady Jemima went into hyſterics; Arabella endeavored to look bold; the Marquis affected to look grand; Miſs Jemima Byram wiſhed to look unconcerned; and Mr. Laſſiter looked rather worſe, as being rather more cowardly, than Milton's dark angel after his fall. He was perceived caſting one eye towards the door, and Broome inſtantly occupied his retreat, while Lord Armathwaite taking up the cauſe of his ſtep-daughter, as an elucidating appendix to the preceding narrative, ſtated the unpardonable hardſhips ſhe had undergone, and the difficulties and dangers to which ſhe had been expoſed, by the machinations of one ſhe had never in any way offended.

Miſs Jemima Byram thus becoming involved in the queſtion, and ſeeing all the ſanguine hopes ſhe had reſted on a return to her mother, blaſted by her equality of evil, ſet up a genuine blubber, and profeſſing her reſolution *never to do tho any more*, endeavored to obtain quarter for herſelf, and was not eaſily ſilenced.

As the laſt act, Laſſiter was compelled to ſurrender his keys, and direct his enemies to the proper place, from whence were ſoon brought, the will, together with Peregrina Lamorne's uncommunicated letter, to which letter Lady Jemima had not been privy; and on this ground ſhe declared war, eternal war, againſt him, as being the only chance of a peace with Sir Clifford.

The will was cancelled. The four culprits were ordered, by the authoritative voice of Sir Clifford himſelf, to depart with ignominy; and he then, addreſſing the Duke,

Duke, expreſſed his ſincere concern for the error to which he had, through ignorance, been acceſſary. His grace with infinite condeſcenſion caſt his eyes on Peregrina, and ſtammered out a hope, that ſtill he might not be baffled in his favorite wiſh of an alliance with the houſe of Byram; and even Sir Clifford's eyes brightened at the idea; but Lord Armathwaite declining for her the high honor intended her, the peer by right, and the peer by courteſy, declared themſelves, however hurt, ſatisfied with Sir Clifford's apology; and the one ſtrutting, and the other tripping, they withdrew.

Nothing now impeding the peace and happineſs of Byram Park, Broome's benevolent heart dilated with joy at the revolution he had effected, and Sir Clifford felt young and active, while with one hand extended to his daughter-in-law, and the other holding that of his granddaughter, he bleſſed God with patriarchal piety that he had lived to ſee that day.

But Peregrina, who could not but feel for the miſeries of thoſe whoſe depreſſion had elevated her, with energetic language intreated Sir Clifford to extend ſome mercy to them, and ſucceeded ſo far, as after dinner to procure permiſſion for a conference with Lady Jemima, whoſe high ſpirit required even now a little coaxing: at laſt perceiving that Peregrina alone had the power of befriending her, ſhe thought proper, with abundance of tears, to confeſs her forlorn condition, and to declare her willingneſs to accept, as unmerited bounty, whatever Sir Clifford would vouchſafe, to reſcue her and her daughters from the evils of poverty.

She had been fetched from Laſſiter's houſe to hear the tender commiſeration of her injured relative: ſhe had followed her huſband in expectation of at leaſt ſharing his fate; but he, willing to get rid of all incumbrances, had declared that he would live no longer in a place where his cha-

racter was *blown*, that he ſhould go inſtantly to London, and thence to America; and that the folks at the Park, his wife, her brats, and all their connections, might, for aught he cared, go to the place whence he ſuppoſed ſuch plagues came: he had then put together his money, and had departed.

Little leſs than by this deſertion was her ladyſhip hurt by the conduct of Mrs. Grubb, who waited only the receipt of her cloaths to ſet off after her huſband, Charles having wiſely tried to get the ſtart of fame, by ſetting off immediately, with a plauſible tale, to ſeek a ſervice in London.

After ſome negociation, for Sir Clifford ſhunned the baſiliſk, Lady Jemima had a promiſe of her former allowance of two hundred pounds a year, on which, and on an intimation from her brother, that he would not deſert her, ſhe decided to retire

tire with her eldeſt daughter into the weſt of England.

A letter from Sir Clifford in a few days brought Sir Edward Bergholt to Byram Park, to receive the hand of Peregrina, and with him he brought accounts of the happineſs of her friends, in letters from the Blyford and Cottiſbrooke families. In a very long letter from Hamilton Courtland, he claimed her commendation for having kept ſome of Ami Bonange's ſecrets, and thanked her for the happineſs he enjoyed in the ſanction of Mr. Blyford, who approving his offer of quitting the army, had made no other objection to his union with Martha.

Thus ended the machinations of malignity in the happineſs of thoſe they were intended to ruin, and the oppreſſion of innocence in the total defeat of its enemies, who hating each other as reciprocally witneſſes of infamy, were at laſt, when

when worn out with diſcontent, brought to confeſs, that they could not have been more wretched, had they been honeſt; and that they had bartered *for nothing*, that peace which the world cannot give, and without which its beſt gifts are not worth poſſeſſing.

FINIS.